NATION

Waiting for muhurat?: SC to Assam over deportations

≫ Page: 5 ≪

BUSINESS

Markets stage recovery as Trump pauses tariffs

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

K'taka wins 22 Golds in swimming, Srihari & Dhinidhi shine

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Day before polls, Kejri & Atishi booked; EC fumes at AAP

EC says we're 3-member body, not run by 1 person; Later meets AAP Chief

AAP Convenor Arvind Kejriwal with Delhi CM Atishi addresses media after a meeting with EC, in New Delhi on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

A day before the Delhi Assembly elections, AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi were booked in separate cases. An FIR was filed against Kejriwal for his remarks on Yamuna river, while Delhi Police registered a case against Atishi for violating the poll code.

At the same time, Election Commission (EC) has hit back at AAP's claims that the poll body is being run by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar, stating that the EC is a three-member body. The EC responded to AAP's allegations of bias, insisting that attempts to malign its authority were an effort to portray it as a single-member entity.

On Tuesday, AAP leaders, including national Convenor Kejriwal and Atishi, met the EC to raise concerns over alleged intimidation tactics ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections. Kejriwal accused

- Atishi's claims followed the registration of three FIRs by Delhi Police over Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violations. One case was filed against Atishi for allegedly obstructing a public servant's duty during a rally in Kalkaji, while two AAP workers were booked for assaulting a police constable.

BJP and Delhi Police of engaging in "hooliganism" to instill fear among voters, particularly in slum areas. He also alleged that voters were being intimidated with threats and money, and claims emerged of people's fingers being marked with black ink to disenfranchise them.

Kejriwal stated that many people were afraid to vote due to this climate of fear and thanked the EC for granting a meeting during the silence period, where officials assured them of a fair election. However, Atishi, contesting from Kalkaji, claimed the BJP was engaging in "hooliganism" and that the Delhi Police and EC were protecting BJP workers while targeting AAP members. Atishi's claims followed the registration of three FIRs by Delhi Police over Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violations. One case was filed against Atishi for allegedly obstructing a public servant's duty during a rally in Kalkaji, while two AAP workers were booked for assaulting a police constable. Additionally, two BJP leaders, including Manish Bidhuri, were also named in separate complaints.

Responding to the accusations, the EC stated it would exercise constitutional restraint and not be swayed by "deliberate pressure tactics" aimed at discrediting the commission. —PTI

>>>More on Pages 3 & 4

BHUTAN KING AT KUMBH

Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck takes a dip at Sangam during Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. PM Narendra Modi will visit the Maha Kumbh and take a holy dip on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

ED seizes ₹1,000 cr assets from Chennai firm

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has announced the seizure of assets valued at approximately Rs 1,000 crore following recent searches at the premises of Chennai-based RKM Powergen Private Limited (RKMPPL), accused of "fraudulently" acquiring coal blocks in Chhattisgarh. These raids were carried out under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against RKMPPL and linked individuals, including Andal Arumugam and S Arumugam. The investigation is connected to a CBI case concerning the alleged fraudulent acquisition of the Fatehpur East Coal Block, allocated by the Ministry of Coal for the power sector. RKMPPL reportedly secured a loan from the Power Finance Corporation, subsequently transferring a portion of Rs 3,800 crore to a foreign entity, MIPP.—*PTI*

K'TAKA MIN WILL ORDER TO SHOOT COW SMUGGLERS

KARWAR, 4 FEB

Amid cow theft cases in Uttara Kannada district, District in-charge Minister Mankal S Vaidya has warned that those indulging in such activities would be shot at in the open.

Asserting that he will not let such activities to continue in the district, he assured that the administration is taking all necessary measures to protect cows and those rearing it.

The Minister's statement came in the wake of outrage over the recent incident of the slaughtering of a pregnant cow near Honnavar here.

"Cow theft has been happening for several years. I have told the SP (Superintendent of Police) that this should stop and should not happen at any cost. It is wrong. We worship cows. We affectionately rear this animal. We grow up drinking its milk," Vaidya said.

Speaking to reporters here late on Monday, he said, he had instructed police to take merciless action against those behind it, irrespective of whoever they are.

"Arrests have been made (in some cases). There are enough jobs available in our district. We won't support such people at any cost," he added. —*PTI*

PM says Oppn speaking like 'Urban Naxals'

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

In a scathing attack on Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said some people are openly speaking the language of Urban Naxals and asserted that those who "declare a war" against the Indian State can neither understand the Constitution nor about the country's unity.

He also took a dig at Arvind Kejriwal and AAP a day before the Delhi Assembly polls, saying "some parties are like 'AAP-da' for the future of the youth".

Modi asserted that while his government's schemes saved lot of money, it was not used to build 'Sheesh Mahal'.

Replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address in Lok Sabha, he made several veiled attacks at former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, saying those who entertain themselves by getting photo sessions done in huts of the poor will find the talk about the poor in Parliament boring. Though Modi did not name anyone, his remarks were an apparent reference to Gandhi's comments last month that "we are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself". —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

WHAT MORE DID MODI SAY?

- Those who walk around with Constitution in pockets, do they know how they forced Muslim women to live in hardship. We brought in the triple talaq law to give right to them
- Leaders focussed on jacuzzi & stylish showers but our focus on providing water to every home.
- We removed 25 crore poor out of poverty and gave 4 crore houses.
- In 2002, there was no tax on incomes of up to Rs 2 lakh and now there is no income tax on earnings up to Rs 12 lakh

> It is right that the incident (stampede) took place. It was not a very big incident. It is being exaggerated. It was very well-managed
>
> —Hema Malini, BJP MP

Gujarat forms UCC panel, Oppn calls it diversionary

GANDHINAGAR, 4 FEB

The Gujarat government has established a five-member committee, led by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Desai, to assess the necessity of implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state. The committee has been tasked with drafting a bill related to the UCC and is expected to submit its findings within 45 days. While the government has expressed its commitment to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a nationwide UCC, opposition leaders argue that the move is a diversion from pressing issues, particularly ahead of local body elections. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

TO LAND IN AMRITSAR

Trump's plane deports 205 'illegal' Indians

NEW DELHI, 4 JAN

At least 205 Indians, who had illegally entered the US, were deported on a US military aircraft that took off from Texas on Tuesday.

The first round of deportation of illegal Indians from the US comes around two weeks after Donald Trump became the US President for a second term.

The official, who requested anonymity, said that a C-17 aircraft had departed with migrants on board, though it would not reach India only after 24 hours.

The plane will land at the Amritsar airport on Wednesday.

Military flights are a costly way to transport migrants. According to Reuters, a military deportation flight to Guatemala last week likely cost at least USD 4,675 per migrant.

The US Air Force C-17 has a single toilet onboard for 205 passengers.

Reportedly each deported Indian national is verified, indicating New Delhi's involvement in the deportation process. "These actions send a clear message: illegal migration is not worth the risk," US embassy spokesperson said. Following his phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 27 January, Trump said India "will do what is right" on the deportation of illegal migrants from the US. —*Agencies*

>>>More on Page 6

First batch of 205 illegal Indian migrants in US are enroute to India on board USAF C-17 military aircraft *PHOTO: X*

TRUMP TO PULL US FROM UNHRC, STOP RELIEF FUNDS

US President Donald Trump is expected to sign an executive order on Tuesday, formally withdrawing the United States from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and halting future funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Politico reports, citing an official document.

The UNHRC, which aims to promote and protect global human rights, has faced criticism from the White House for failing to fulfil its mission. The fact sheet accused the council of being biased against Israel, noting that in 2018, the UNHRC passed more resolutions condemning Israel than Syria, Iran, and North Korea combined. The US withdrawal from the UNHRC was initially made in 2018 under Trump's administration. —*ANI*

IN TRADE WAR, CHINA SLAPS TARIFFS ON US

BEIJING, 4 FEB

China countered President Donald Trump's tariffs on Chinese products with tariffs of its own on multiple US imports on Tuesday, as well as announcing an anti-trust investigation into Google and other trade measures.

US tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico also were to go into effect from Tuesday, though Trump agreed to a 30-day pause on his threats against the two countries as they acted to appease his concerns about border security and drug trafficking.

Trump has plans to talk with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the next few days. This isn't the first round of tit-for-tat actions between the two countries. China and the US had engaged in a trade war in 2018 when Trump raised tariffs on Chinese goods and China responded in kind. This time, analysts said, China is much better prepared to counter. "They have a much more developed export control regime. We depend on them for a lot of critical minerals: gallium, germanium, graphite, a host of others. So … they could put some significant harm on our economy," said an US official. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

T'gana resolution urges Centre for caste survey

HYDERABAD, 4 FEB

Telangana Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on Tuesday, urging the Centre to emulate the household caste and socioeconomic survey conducted by the state government.

Observing that a constitutional amendment is required to provide 42 per cent reservations to Backward Classes as per law (which leads to breaching the 50 per cent cap on quotas), Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said Congress would provide a 42 per cent quota for Backward Classes in the upcoming local body elections in the state. The Cabinet met on Tuesday to deliberate on the caste survey, before presenting it to the Assembly. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

HIGH ALERT

7 monkey fever cases in C'magaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 4 FEB

As summer approaches, the resurgence of Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), commonly known as monkey fever, has been reported in Karnataka's forested regions. On Monday, health authorities confirmed seven new cases in Chikkamagaluru district, raising the total to eight from just one reported last Sunday.

In light of this alarming development, district officials have declared a high alert in the forest-rich taluks of NR Pura, Kopp, and Shrungeri. Local hospitals have set up dedicated wards for KFD patients.

The season's first confirmed case involved a young man from Khandya village in NR Pura, followed by three more cases from Malpar village. Last year, KFD resulted in approximately ten fatalities in Uttara Kannada district, predominantly within Siddapur taluk.

PHOTO: PTI

A 42-year-old man from local forest hamlets has been identified as the first confirmed viral infection case this year, raising concerns about local transmission as he has no recent travel history.

In response, the health department has urged residents in affected areas to wear full-body clothing and eliminate mosquito breeding sites, as no specific medication is available. Testing rates have significantly increased, with an average of 15 individuals tested on Monday and Tuesday, compared to just five the previous week. Chikkamagaluru, home to around 2 to 2.2 million people, has isolation wards with 25 beds established in all three taluk hospitals, ensuring round-the-clock medical support. —*Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

SC ALLOWS K'TAKA HC TO APPOINT 158 CIVIL JUDGES

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Supreme Court on Tuesday permitted the Karnataka High Court to proceed with the recruitment of 158 civil judges, despite a state government circular halting the process. The circular, issued in November 2024, had made changes to the reservation criteria under the Karnataka Judicial Service (Recruitment) (Amendment) Rules, effectively stopping direct recruitment.

A bench led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, along with Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan, directed that the recruitment process continue as an interim measure, pending the final decision on the matter. —*PTI*

India inks deal with Russia for anti-ship cruise missiles

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

India on Tuesday inked a contract with Russia for procurement of anti-ship cruise missiles, a move that will significantly augment the combat capabilities of the Indian Navy's submarine fleet.

The Defence Ministry made the announcement in a post on X.

The contract was inked in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.

The German engineering and steel production conglomerate Thyssenkrupp is set to build six submarines for the Navy in a multi-billion-dollar deal after a bid with its Indian partner was approved. The conglomerate's shipbuilding division, known as Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS), teamed up with India's state-owned Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDS) for the contract. Both companies recently confirmed that India's Ministry of Defense had opened the bid for "further processing."

The bid was the only one to clear the navy's field trials, beating off competition from Spanish company Navantia, which had partnered with India's Larsen & Toubro. An exchange filing by MDS said the Indian Ministry of Defense had invited the company for commercial negotiations. Media reports quoting people close to the discussions put the value of the project at around $5.2 billion but the final figure could be higher. —*Agencies*

Kalaburagi school gets hoax bomb threat via email

KALABURAGI, 4 FEB

A private school in Kalaburagi received a bomb threat via email on Tuesday, prompting the immediate evacuation of students, police reported. Upon being informed about the threat, local police quickly arrived on the scene. An anti-sabotage team and a bomb detection and disposal squad were deployed to conduct a thorough search of the school premises. Kalaburagi Police Commissioner Sharanappa SD said email's subject mentioned an RDX bomb explosion at school, but content was in Tamil. Upon translation, it was found to discuss unrelated political matters in Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

'K'taka liquor lobby sabotaging Kerala brewery'

T'PURAM, 4 FEB

The ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) in Kerala has asserted that resistance to a new brewery in Palakkad district is being orchestrated by the liquor lobby from neighbouring Karnataka. In a statement, LDF convener TP Ramakrishnan defended the government's decision to establish the brewery, highlighting that the state already has policies in place for alcohol production. He noted that RJD, a partner in the LDF, has expressed interest in discussing the brewery issue, adding that the ruling coalition is open to addressing concerns raised by its allies. CPI(M) state secretary MV Govindan echoed similar sentiments, claiming that the Karnataka liquor lobby is concerned about losing market share in Kerala due to the new brewery's output. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Rs 1.18 cr ganja seized from car after crash

BIDAR, 4 FEB

An extraordinary incident unfolded on Monday afternoon near Rajeshwar in Basavakalyan Taluk when a car overturned while swerving to avoid a woman crossing the road. Upon investigation, authorities uncovered over 118 kg of ganja valued at more than Rs 1.18 crore within the vehicle. The accident occurred on National Highway 65 near the village bridge as the driver lost control after colliding with a roadside barrier. Locals arrived promptly, witnessing packets of ganja spilling onto the roadway. The two occupants, Feroz and Riyaz, both from Maharashtra, were detained by locals and subsequently handed over to the police. The vehicle, en route from Telangana to Mumbai, had evaded multiple checkpoints, raising questions about police oversight and smuggling operations. A case has been filed at Basavakalyan Rural Police Station, with investigations ongoing. *—PTI*

Man involved in over 150 break in cases arrested

BENGALURU, 4 FEB

A notorious burglar linked to over 150 house break-in theft (HBT) cases across multiple states has been arrested in Bengaluru. The accused, identified as Panchakshari Swamy, 37, a native of Maharashtra, is currently in police custody. Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda said Swamy has a long history of burglaries spanning Gujarat, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. "He has served time in jails in Gujarat and Maharashtra and was released from a prison in Maharashtra," Dayananda stated. Swamy was arrested by Madiwala police while investigating a burglary at the house of a businessman in Maruthinagar. During interrogation, he confessed his involvement. *—Salar News*

BBMP head among 18 named in Rs 160 crore hiring scam

700 marshals were appointed under false pretences

BENGALURU, 4 FEB

A significant financial scandal involving the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has emerged, with accusations of embezzlement amounting to Rs 160 crore linked to the BBMP's marshal services. Two separate complaints have been filed with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Lokayukta against the BBMP Commissioner Tushar Girinath, Chief Marshal Rajveer Singh, and 16 other senior officials.

In 2017, the BBMP established a marshal programme aimed at supervising waste management, following a resolution endorsed by the state government. However, it is alleged that this initiative was misused, with marshals fraudulently assigned to safeguard lakes, waste management units, and Indira canteens. Reports suggest that over 700 marshals were appointed under false pretences, leading to the misappropriation of hundreds of crores annually.

RTI activist NR Ramesh said that despite directives many non-veterans were employed as marshals *PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS*

RTI activist and BJP leader NR Ramesh has alleged that despite directives to recruit only retired army personnel, many non-veterans were employed as marshals. Each marshal is reportedly paid a salary of Rs 25,000, yet the actual amount received is just Rs 17,000 to Rs 18,000. Additionally, while the BBMP took out Rs 5 lakh insurance policies for each marshal, concerns have arisen regarding unclaimed insurance money when marshals were hospitalised, resulting in the BBMP covering medical expenses instead.

In an unrelated incident, a former BBMP data entry operator was arrested in October 2023 for allegedly defrauding over 200 individuals by promising marshal jobs, collecting Rs 3,000 from each job aspirant.

The State Auditor has raised alarm over missing records worth more than Rs 16 crore related to marshal services, with several objections lodged in recent years that BBMP officials appear to have disregarded, fuelling suspicions of complicity.

Calls for a high-level judicial inquiry have intensified, with demands for the official recording of senior officials' involvement. The ED and Lokayukta are currently investigating these serious allegations. *—Salar News*

ADMINISTERING OATH

Governor Thawarchand Gehlot with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and eight newly appointed Karnataka Information Commissioners in Raj Bhavan on Tuesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

BJP rift is to cleanse the party, not for positions: Yatnal

KALABURAGI, 4 FEB

Amid ongoing factional disputes, senior BJP legislator Basanagouda Patil Yatnal has rallied fellow party leaders demanding the removal of BY Vijayendra as Karnataka's BJP president, asserting their intentions are to "cleanse the party" rather than seek personal power.

Yatnal, the Bijapur City MLA, has been vocal in his criticism of both Vijayendra and his father, veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa, labelling their actions as "nepotism" and "corruption." His faction, which includes leaders such as Ramesh Jarkiholi and Kumar Bangarappa, has travelled to New Delhi to meet national BJP heads to discuss their grievances.

Yatnal emphasised urges to keep "the corrupt family away" and maintain a stance against dynasty politics, claiming, "If Vijayendra is named president again, I will demand a position for my son too." Vijayendra was appointed state BJP president only in November 2023, yet his leadership has already sparked discontent among senior members, who accuse him of "adjustment politics."

Basanagouda Patil Yatnal; BY Vijayendra *PHOTOS: X / PTI*

Expressing confidence about the upcoming organisational elections, Vijayendra hopes for a "happy ending" regarding his position. In response, Yatnal stated that the importance of the election should be acknowledged and insisted that their faction will not relent in their demands.

The tension continues to grow as both factions prepare for clashes in the ongoing organisational polls. Yatnal stated, "It is to make it as pure as the Ganga. I have no expectations of becoming the state president." *—PTI*

Two arrested in Gadag for rape and blackmail

GADAG, 4 FEB

Karnataka's Gadag Police have arrested two individuals for allegedly raping and blackmailing a 15-year-old girl. The suspects, identified as Suleman and Altaf, have been charged under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, according to police reports.

Suleman is accused of raping the minor in December, while Altaf allegedly filmed the incident. Following the assault, the pair reportedly threatened the girl with the video and subsequently blackmailed her.

The case came to light after the girl disclosed the incident to her parents, who then lodged a complaint at the Naregal police station in Gadag district. . POCSO Act is a special legislation aimed at safeguarding children from sexual abuse and exploitation, prescribing severe penalties, including life imprisonment, for those. *—ANI*

GOVT MULLS 10 -YEAR JAIL

Belagavi man dies by suicide over microfin harrasment

BELAGAVI, 4 FEB

PHOTO: PTI

A 66-year-old farmer Shivanappa Dharmatti from Alagavadi in Raibag taluk ended his life by consuming poison at his home on Tuesday. The incident comes amid government's ordinance proposal of a fine of up to five lakhs and jail term of up to 10 years for the executives of microfinance institutions (MFIs) using coercive tactics to recover loans to stop the 'torture' of the poor by microfinance companies. Deputy Chief Minsister DK Shivakumar said, "Our government will not allow microfinance companies to take the law into their own hands and torture the poor using hooligans. We will give more power to the police to handle this".

he said, "Many FIRs have been filed against microfinance companies in Belagavi, Bidar, Mysuru, and Ramanagara. The chief minister and the cooperative ministers have already issued stern warnings in this regard."

According to Belagavi Superintendent of Police, Bhimashankar Guled, Shivanappa had borrowed Rs 10 lakh from various microfinance companies to fund his wife's cancer treatment. Tragically, the relentless harassment from loan recovery agents became unbearable.

Family members reported that recovery staff had visited their home the previous day, shouting loudly. Shivanappa, who managed a small agricultural plot, struggled to meet his loan obligations due to his wife's health issues and the subsequent decline in crop yields. Beside him was found a bottle of pesticide. This is not an isolated case; just last month, a woman was found dead hanging from a tree near a national highway. In a separate incident on Tuesday in Haveri district, 47-year-old farmer Nagesh Pavadeppar attempted to take his own life after feeding poison to his two children, having been harassed by loan recovery agents. Thankfully, all three are now out of danger. Dadafir Tiluvalli, a 32-year-old engaged in the areca nut business, also attempted suicide after facing similar pressures. Legal action is being considered against the offending finance companies.

(Suicide is not the solution. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support)

—Salar News

Man held for rape and murder of B'deshi woman

BENGALURU, 4 FEB

The Ramamurthy Nagar police have arrested the driver of a water tanker who had been on the run after the alleged rape and murder of a 28-year-old Bangladeshi woman near Kalkere in the city.

The accused, Mudakanna alias Upendra, 30, is a resident of Bagalkot and has been staying at Saraipalya in the city.

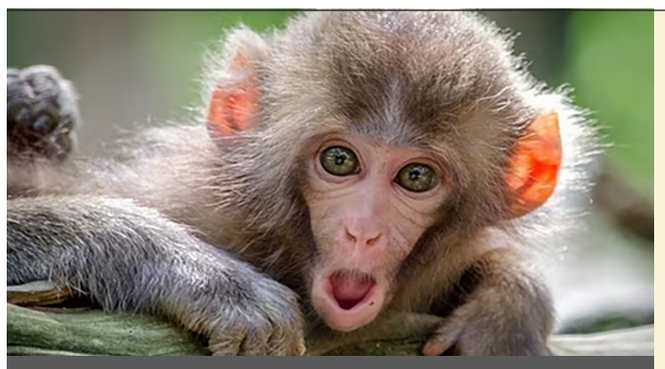
The victim, a mother of three, was employed as a domestic help at an apartment building near Kalkere. She also lived in the same locality with her husband Suman, who is employed by BBMP. Police said Mudakanna, who used to supply water in the Kalkere area, stalked the woman and tried to strike up conversations with her on several occasions. In the afternoon on 23 January, as she was returning from work, Mudakanna waylaid, gagged and raped her at an isolated spot near Kalkere Lake, they said. He strangled her using her own shawl and crushed her head with a stone before dumping her body in the bushes. Next morning, passersby found the woman's body and alerted the police. The police filed a murder case and formed three special teams to track down the perpetrator. They examined CCTV footage from the surrounding roads and leveraged technical evidence to identify and arrest Mudakanna. *—Salar News*

COP FOR A DAY

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda with cancer patients during 'Police Officer for a Day' to mark World Cancer Day at TMC in Bengaluru on Tuesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

STAY SAFE

All you need to know about monkey fever



WHAT IS MONKEY FEVER?

- Viral disease caused by Kyasanur Forest Disease Virus (KFDV).
- First identified in 1957 in Kyasanur Forest, Karnataka, India.
- Primarily affects monkeys and humans.

SYMPTOMS

- Sudden onset of fever, chills, and headache.
- Severe muscle pain and joint pain.
- Bleeding tendencies, including nosebleeds or gum bleeding.
- In severe cases: Neurological complications.

HIGH-RISK AREAS

- Forested regions in South India (Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu).
- Associated with seasonal tick activity, primarily during November-May.

PREVENTION

- Avoid visiting forested areas during tick season.
- Wear protective clothing and use tick repellents.
- Vaccination available in endemic areas.
- Tick control measures in forests and villages.

TREATMENT

- No specific antiviral treatment for monkey fever.
- Supportive care: Hydration, pain management, and bleeding control.
- Early diagnosis is crucial for better recovery.

WHO ARE AFFECTED

- Resident and migratory farmers who graze animals.
- Tribal forest-dwellers who harvest fuel wood and non-timber forest products.
- Day labourers in plantations and State Forest department officials.

NUMBER SPEAK

Total cases :
- 250+ Positive cases reported since January 2024.

Affected areas:
- Uttara Kannada, Shivamogga, and Chikkamagaluru districts.

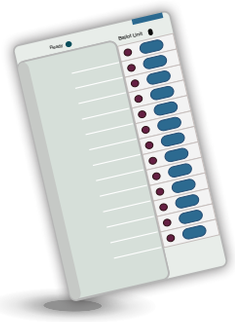
12 deaths:
- Victims include an 18-year-old girl and a 79-year-old man.

Uttara Kannada:
- 108 cases; 9 deaths

Shivamogga and Chikkamagaluru:
- Isolated deaths due to delayed treatment and lack of awareness.

DELHI GOES TO POLLS

A BATTLE FOR POWER, SURVIVAL, AND POLITICAL COMEBACK



NO. OF VOTERS
1.5 CRORE

ELECTION DATE
5 FEB

RESULT ON
8 FEB

- Delhi covers 1,450 sqkm, including 50 sqkm of government offices and embassies, making the Assembly election a symbol of power and influence.
- A BJP win would solidify control over the Legislative Assembly, police, and land, completing its dominance in the Hindi heartland.
- AAP, in power since 2013, seeks a win for survival and to counter money laundering allegations in the excise policy case.
- Congress, which ruled Delhi from 1998 to 2013, aims to reclaim political ground lost after setbacks in Haryana and Maharashtra.

HOT SEATS IN DELHI

NEW DELHI
AAP Supremo Arvind Kejriwal won this seat for the 1st time in 2013, defeating Congress CM Sheila Dikshit. In 2020, he secured victory by 21,687 votes.

KALKAJI
Kalkaji will see a three-way battle between AAP's Delhi CM Atishi, BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri and Congress's Alka Lamba.

SHAKUR BASTI
Satyendar Jain, who was in jail for 18 months in an ED money laundering case, will seek re-election for the 4th time from here. Jain will face Congress's Satish Luthra.

JANGPURA
After over a year in jail in the excise policy case, AAP's Manish Sisodia will fight for Jangpura seat against BJP's Tarvinder Singh Marwah. He will be making his debut after AAP's Praveen Kumar won the seat in 2015 & 2020.

OKHLA
AAP has fielded Amanatullah Khan for the third time. Okhla is home to Shaheen Bagh, the epicentre of 2020 anti-CAA and NRC protests.

MALVIYA NAGAR
Malviya Nagar has been dominated by AAP's Somnath Bharti, who has won the seat by 50% of the vote share in the last 3 elections.

BALLIMARAN
AAP's Imran Hussain's is seeking re-election from this Muslim dominated seat, which falls under Chandi Chowk. Despite BJP's efforts, the party has never won here.

PATPARGANJ
Patparganj seat will be fought between AAP's Awadh Ojha, BJP's Ravinder Singh Negi and Cong's Anil Chaudhary. It has been AAP stronghold for the past 3 elections under Sisodia.

MAIN CANDIDATES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

AAP

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
SEAT: NEW DELHI
PARTY: AAP
ASSETS: ₹4 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 15

ATISHI
SEAT: KALKAJI
PARTY: AAP
ASSETS: ₹76 lakh
CRIMINAL CASES: 4

MANISH SISODIA
SEAT: JANGPURA
PARTY: AAP
ASSETS: ₹1 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 6

BJP

PARVESH SAHIB SINGH VERMA
SEAT: NEW DELHI
PARTY: BJP
ASSETS: ₹115 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 1

RAMESH BIDHURI
SEAT: KALKAJI
PARTY: BJP
ASSETS: ₹19 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 0

KAILASH GAHLOT
SEAT: BIJWASAN
PARTY: BJP
ASSETS: ₹59 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 0

CONGRESS

ALKA LAMBA
SEAT: KALKAJI
PARTY: INC
ASSETS: ₹3 crore
CRIMINAL CASE: 1

ANIL KUMAR
SEAT: PATPARGANJ
PARTY: INC
ASSETS: ₹3 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 7

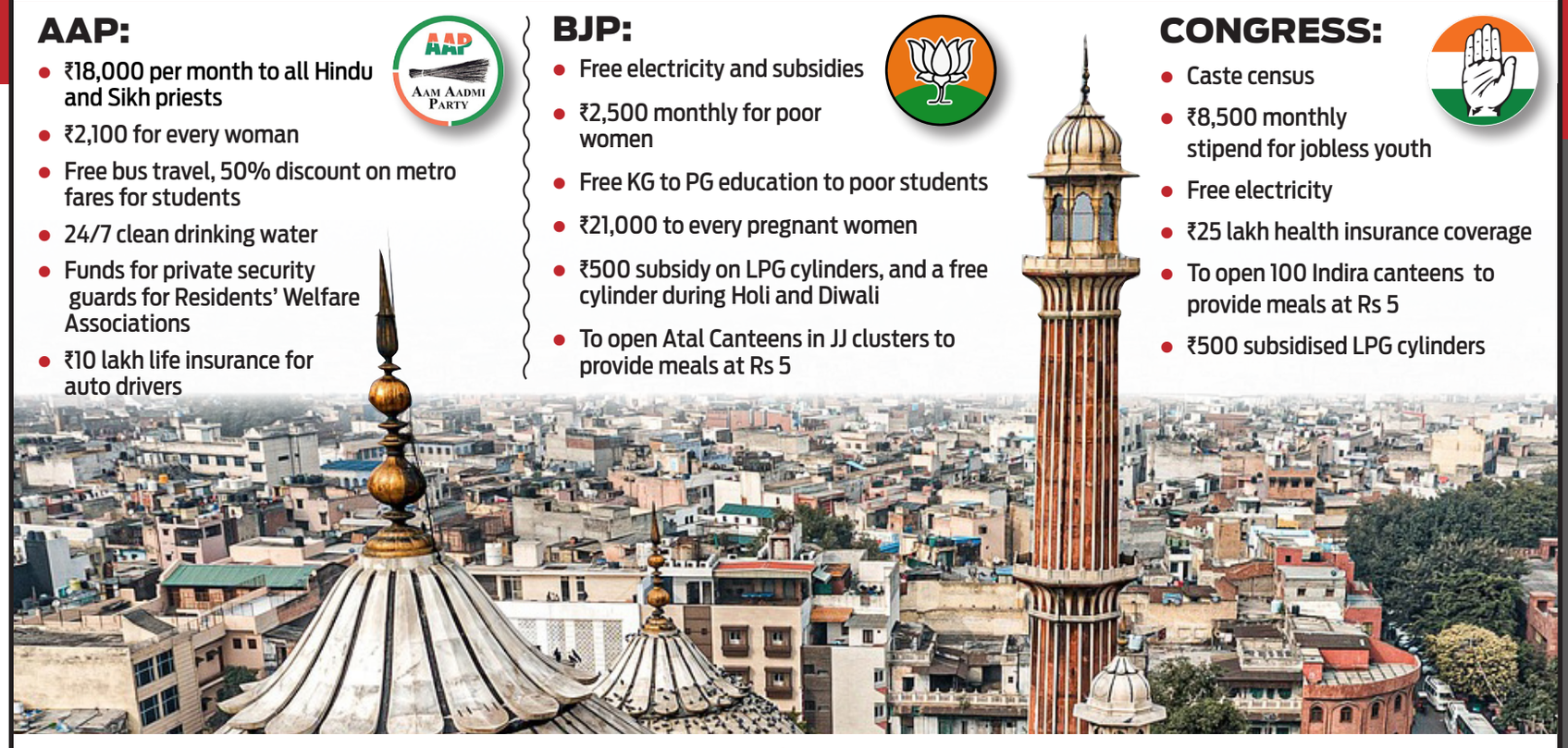
SANDEEP DIKSHIT
SEAT: NEW DELHI
PARTY: INC
ASSETS: ₹11 crore
CRIMINAL CASES: 0

WHO PROMISED WHAT

AAP:
- ₹18,000 per month to all Hindu and Sikh priests
- ₹2,100 for every woman
- Free bus travel, 50% discount on metro fares for students
- 24/7 clean drinking water
- Funds for private security guards for Residents' Welfare Associations
- ₹10 lakh life insurance for auto drivers

BJP:
- Free electricity and subsidies
- ₹2,500 monthly for poor women
- Free KG to PG education to poor students
- ₹21,000 to every pregnant women
- ₹500 subsidy on LPG cylinders, and a free cylinder during Holi and Diwali
- To open Atal Canteens in JJ clusters to provide meals at Rs 5

CONGRESS:
- Caste census
- ₹8,500 monthly stipend for jobless youth
- Free electricity
- ₹25 lakh health insurance coverage
- To open 100 Indira canteens to provide meals at Rs 5
- ₹500 subsidised LPG cylinders



ISSUES IN FOCUS

- **Law & Order:** Rising crime, gang violence, and alleged political arrests plague Delhi.
- **Pollution:** Air quality remains a crisis, worsened by stubble burning and construction.
- **Corruption:** AAP faces liquor policy allegations, with Kejriwal's arrest adding to the turmoil.
- **Welfare Schemes:** AAP & BJP promise aid for women, but sustainability concerns persist.
- **Infrastructure:** Demand for better water, waste management, and transport. BJP stresses on upgrades.
- **Mohalla clinics:** The issue revolves around allegations of corruption and poor services.

MIRRED IN CONTROVERSIES

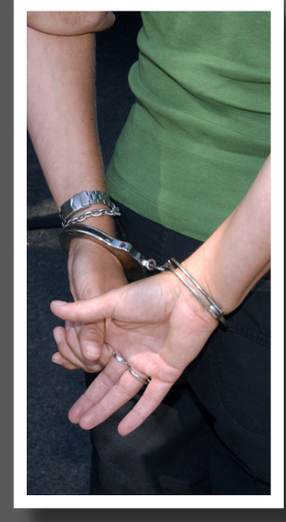
- **Electoral roll tampered?:** AAP said voters from outside Delhi were added to the electoral list. They also alleged that names of minorities were deleted from the list.
- **Kejri's 'Sheesh Mahal':** The estimated renovation cost of Kejriwal's 'Sheesh Mahal' was Rs 7.61 crore, but CAG report found irregularities with final expenditure escalating to Rs 33.66 crore. BJP meanwhile alleged that the AAP government did not table the CAG report in the Assembly.
- **Yamuna row:** Kejriwal accused Haryana of poisoning Yamuna River, causing toxic froth. EC asked Kejri to give proof for his claims. PM Modi said that asked how could BJP govt poison the water he was drinking.

POSTER WAR

Delhi saw a poster war with BJP's caricature showing Kejri wearing a crown while holding a liquor bottle, in an apparent dig at his alleged involvement in liquor scam; AAP hit back showing Ramesh Bidhuri in a poster after he abused CM Atishi and made a sexist remark against MP Priyanka Gandhi
PHOTOS: X

AAP FACES LEGAL HEAT

Several AAP leaders have faced jail in excise policy & money laundering cases



ARVIND KEJRIWAL
He was arrested in March 2024 by ED on corruption allegations in a liquor policy scam. He was granted bail by the Supreme Court in September 2024 after nearly six months in detention.

MANISH SISODIA
He was arrested by the CBI in February 2023 in connection with the Delhi excise policy case. BJP called him the 'kingpin' behind it. He was granted bail after 17 months in jail.

SATYENDAR JAIN
He was arrested in May 2022 in a money laundering case. He was released on bail in October 2024 after over two years .

SANJAY SINGH
A prominent AAP leader and Member of Parliament, Singh was arrested in connection with the Delhi liquor policy case.

RESEARCH: AMINA AFAQ, AARATI KRISHNA, SUBHALAKSHMI PR, SIDDHARTH SALDANHA DESIGN: BOOPATHY

PHOTO: ANI

Delhi court rejects defamation case against Tharoor

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

A Delhi court has dismissed a criminal defamation complaint filed by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar against Congress MP Shashi Tharoor. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Paras Dalal ruled that there were "no ingredients of defamation" in Chandrasekhar's allegations, which claimed that Tharoor made false statements during a television interview regarding voter bribery in the Thiruvananthapuram constituency during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Chandrasekhar argued that Tharoor's remarks were intended to damage his reputation and influence the election outcome. Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court has summoned Tharoor in a separate defamation suit, where Chandrasekhar seeks Rs 10 crore in damages for the alleged harm to his reputation. The case will be heard again on 28 April. —*PTI*

Prez of UN General Assembly Yang on 4-day India visit

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

President of the UN General Assembly Philemon Yang is paying a four-day visit to India beginning Tuesday. Yang, who assumed the responsibility at the global body in September, previously served as the prime minister of Cameroon. The President of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly (PGA) is visiting India at the invitation of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, according to an official readout. Yang will also pay a courtesy call on President Droupadi Murmu. Apart from New Delhi, Yang will be visiting Bengaluru. —*PTI*

Damania alleges ₹88 crore scam against Munde

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

Activist Anjali Damania has accused former Agriculture Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Dhananjay Munde of orchestrating a Rs 88 crore scam during his tenure in the agricultural department, which was part of the previous Mahayuti coalition government in Maharashtra. Munde dismissed Damania's claims as "baseless" and politically motivated. Specifically, Damania claimed that while a 500-millilitre bottle of nano urea was available for Rs 92, the department procured it at Rs 220. She alleged that the then agriculture commissioner, Pravin Gedam, raised concerns regarding these purchases, which were disregarded by Munde. —*PTI*

HC grants bail to Sena (UBT) leader in 'khichdi' case

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

The Bombay High Court has granted bail to Suraj Chavan, a functionary of the Shiv Sena (UBT), who has been in custody for over a year in connection with a money laundering case involving alleged irregularities in distributing 'khichdi' packets to migrant workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Justice Milind Jadhav noted that the trial was unlikely to conclude soon, stating that continuing Chavan's detention would violate his rights to a speedy trial and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Chavan was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in January 2024, following an FIR by the Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing. The ED claims Chavan received over Rs 1.35 crore, purportedly diverting funds intended for migrant workers. Despite the ED's objections to bail, the court found that Chavan had sufficiently cooperated with the investigation and his incarceration was unwarranted. —*PTI*

Battle for Capital: AAP eyes third term

BJP, Cong look at resurgence as Delhi votes in a contest that can reshape political landscape

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

The stage is set for the high-stakes Assembly elections in Delhi, with over 1.56 crore voters eligible to cast their ballots from 7 am onwards on Wednesday.

Voting will take place across 13,766 polling stations in all the 70 Assembly constituencies to decide the fates of 699 candidates in a contest that could reshape the political landscape of the capital.

Led by Arvind Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is seeking a third straight term, banking on its governance record and welfare schemes.

On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is making a determined push to reclaim the capital after more than 25 years.

The Congress, which ruled Delhi for 15 years till 2013, is striving to stage a comeback after failing to win a single seat in the previous two elections.

Voting will take place across 13,766 polling stations in all the 70 Assembly constituencies to decide the fates of 699 candidates PHOTO: X

Polling will begin at 7 am on Wednesday and continue until 6 pm under tight security arrangements.

In an effort to streamline the process, the Election Commission has introduced a Queue Management System (QMS) app, which will enable the voters to check crowd levels in real time.

The campaigning, which officially ended at 6 pm on Monday, saw a high-voltage battle between the three main contenders.

The AAP focused on its governance model, with Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi leading rallies across the city.

Led by heavyweights like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda, the BJP intensified its attack on the AAP over corruption allegations and law and order issues.

The Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, too put up a spirited campaign, targeting both the AAP and the BJP on various issues.

The discourse was marked by aggressive name-calling, AI-generated spoofs, and debates over issues such as the "Sheesh Mahal" controversy, Yamuna's water quality, and allegations of voter list tampering. —*PTI*

MORE 1,000 CASES OF MCC VIOLATION FILED

Delhi Police has recorded 1,076 cases of alleged MCC violations and arrested or detained 34,250 people for it, an official said on Tuesday. These are cases lodged between 7 January, when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into force, and 3 February which was the last day of campaigning for the Delhi Assembly polls. Voting will be held on Wednesday. Delhi Police also confiscated 469 illegal firearms and 513 cartridges with 491 people arrested under the Arms Act, according to a statement. Police have also seized 1,10,093 litres of liquor and 1,381 people were arrested for it. It said 196.602 kg of drugs worth over Rs 77.9 crore and more than 1,200 banned injections were also seized and arrested 177 people for it. The office of Delhi Chief Electoral Officer also released its data on MCC violations on Monday. It said seizures worth over Rs 220 crores have been made ahead of polls. —*PTI*

Gujarat forms UCC panel, Oppn hits back

GANDHINAGAR, 4 FEB

The Gujarat government has established a five-member committee, led by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Desai, to assess the necessity of implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state. The committee has been tasked with drafting a bill related to the UCC and is expected to submit its findings within 45 days.

Gujarat CM Bhupendrabhai Patel

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel announced the initiative, asserting that the UCC would protect the rights of tribal communities. The committee, which includes retired IAS officer CL Meena and advocate RC Kodekar, will consult with religious leaders, including representatives from the Muslim community.

While the government has expressed its commitment to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a nationwide UCC, opposition leaders argue that the move is a diversion from pressing issues, particularly ahead of local body elections. They contend that the UCC could negatively impact the cultural practices of minority communities, including the 14% tribal population in Gujarat.

Critics, including Aam Aadmi Party leader Isudan Gadhvi and AIMIM leader Danish Siddique, have expressed concerns that the UCC may disproportionately affect certain groups and serve as a tool for political gain. However, committee member Gita Shroff maintained that a common legal framework would provide significant benefits, particularly for women and children facing challenges in their quest for justice.

The committee is set to clarify the implications of the UCC on various communities within the state. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

TMC calls for renaming West Bengal to 'Bangla'

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has formally requested the renaming of West Bengal to 'Bangla', highlighting its cultural and historical significance. During a recent Zero Hour mention in the Rajya Sabha, TMC MP Ritabrata Banerjee pointed out that the West Bengal Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution for the name change back in July 2018, but the central government has yet to act on it.

Banerjee noted that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had previously communicated with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that the renaming would better reflect the state's heritage, culture, and the aspirations of its people. He emphasised that the 1947 partition of Bengal led to the distinction of West Bengal and the area now known as Bangladesh, arguing that the name change is overdue.

The last state renaming occurred in 2011 when Orissa was officially changed to Odisha. Historical city name changes across India have included Bombay to Mumbai in 1995 and Calcutta to Kolkata in 2001.

In addition to the renaming proposal, other topics raised in the Rajya Sabha included demands for national status for the Bali Jatra festival and strategies for water conservation to alleviate flooding. The session also addressed the impact of climate change on agriculture, urging need for resilient seed varieties. —*PTI*

LS GETS HEATED UP

Prez insulted: PM's swipe at Sonia

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a swipe at Congress leader Sonia Gandhi over her "poor thing" remark about President Droupadi Murmu, saying the first citizen of the country is being insulted.

Replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in the Lok Sabha, Modi referred to Gandhi's remarks.

Without naming the Congress leader, he said, "After the president's address -- a woman president, the daughter of a poor family -- if you cannot respect her, it is up to you. But what all is being said to insult her? I can understand political frustration but against the president...? What is the reason...?"

The Prime Minister said India is leaving such mindsets behind and surging ahead with the mantra of women-led development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the Motion of Thanks to President's address in Lok Sabha, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Soon after the President delivered her address to a joint sitting of Parliament on 31 January, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were seen discussing the speech in the Parliament. During the discussion, Rahul was heard asking Sonia if the President's speech was "boring".

Sonia's "poor thing and very tired" remarks about Murmu have snowballed into a huge controversy.

"Pain of poor, troubles of common man, cannot be understood just like that; it requires passion and some just don't have it," Modi said in swipe at opposition. —*PTI*

TALKS WITH FARMERS ON 14 FEB

The Centre on Tuesday informed Parliament that the sixth round of discussions with agitating farmers in Punjab and Haryana will be held on 14 February. In the previous round held last month, the government had proposed a five-year plan for the procurement of certain crops at Minimum Support Prices (MSP), but did not reach a consensus on the farmers' broader demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP. —*PTI*

BJP MP urges breach of privilege notice against RaGa

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Tuesday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for initiating breach of privilege proceedings against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for "blatant lies and vilification campaign" during his speech in the House.

With the Leader of Opposition's speech on Monday during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address drawing strong protests from the ruling BJP, Dubey submitted his notice to the Speaker and claimed that the Congress leader is using his parliamentary privilege to spread canards without authenticating his charges.

Gandhi had also alleged that India had sent Foreign Minister S Jaishankar to the US get an invite for Prime Minister Narendra Modi for US President Donald Trump's swearing-in ceremony.

'False': Rajnath on RaGa's remarks on Army chief

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh accused Rahul of making "false allegations" about the statement of the Army chief on the situation at the India-China border.

"The words attributed to the Army Chief by Shri Rahul Gandhi were never spoken by him at any time.' —*PTI*

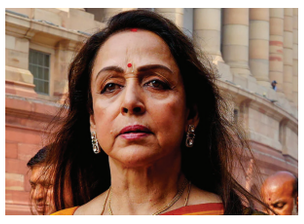
Kumbh stampede was not big, being exaggerated: Hema Malini

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Maha Kumbh stampede was not a "big incident" and is being "exaggerated", BJP MP **Hema Malini** said on Tuesday asserting the congregation is being managed very well.

The stampede took place on 29 January, the occasion of Mauni Amavasya , one of the most auspicious days of the Hindu calendar. According to official figures released by the Uttar Pradesh government, at least 30 people lost their lives and 60 were injured in the pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area in Prayagraj.

"We had gone to Kumbh... We had a nice bath... Everything was well managed. It is right that the incident (stampede) took place ... Itna kuch bada nai hua tha (it was not a very big incident). I don't know how big it was. It is being exaggerated... It was very well-managed, and everything was done very well... So many people are coming, it is very difficult to manage but we are doing our best...," Malini told reporters in the Parliament House complex.



Hema Malini PHOTO: PTI

The actor-turned politician had also taken a dip during Kumbh on day of stampede.

Asked about Opposition members alleging that the government was hiding the number of deaths in the stampede, she said, "They will say whatever they want to... It is their job to say wrong things." —*PTI*

> The government is continuously reeling out budget numbers, please also give the numbers of those who died in the Kumbh
>
>
>
> —Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party leader

> Politicians, those with big money attending Maha Kumbh should die to attain 'moksha'
>
>
>
> —Pappu Yadav, Lok Sabha MP

INDIA HAS ROBUST SYSTEM TO TACKLE PANDEMICS: NADDA

India has a very robust system to deal with future pandemics and public health emergencies, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda asserted in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Replying to supplementary questions in the Rajya Sabha, Nadda highlighted the steps taken by the government in the last 10 years to strengthen India's health system, especially in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Listing out India's capabilities, Nadda said the country has the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC), which oversees and keeps surveillance. —*PTI*

'IN A VOLATILE WORLD'

India-EU ties more crucial than ever: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar emphasised the significance of a robust India-European Union (EU) relationship during his address at the IIC-Bruegel annual seminar on Tuesday, highlighting its potential as an "important stabilising factor" in an increasingly volatile world.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the seminar, Jaishankar pointed to the disregard for international law in various regions, implying tensions between India's eastern and western neighbours. He noted that, despite prevailing narratives of stability, the global order is fraying, with inconsistencies in the application of principles governing international relations.

- As India acknowledges Europe's strategic awakening, Jaishankar pointed to burgeoning cooperation in defence, security, and technology as indicators of the strengthening partnership

Jaishankar also tackled pressing issues such as trade, digital technology, climate action, and their connections to geopolitics. He remarked on the pressing need to update the political and economic frameworks that underpin global interactions, stating, "We are truly entering a time of multipolarity and rebalancing."

The minister asserted that while existing structures will remain relevant, a nationalistic resurgence may drive critical changes.

As India acknowledges Europe's strategic awakening, Jaishankar pointed to burgeoning cooperation in defence, security, and technology as indicators of the strengthening partnership. "The bottom line is that our India-EU relationship is more important than ever," he concluded, affirming the need for both sides to navigate contemporary challenges together. —*PTI*

S Jaishankar PHOTO: PTI

Telangana opposes removal of quota for creamy layer

HYDERABAD, 4 FEB

The Telangana government on Tuesday accepted three key recommendations of a judicial commission appointed by it for implementation of SC categorisation, while rejecting the panel's another suggestion to exempt the creamy layer from reservations, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said.

Reddy was making a statement on the SC categorisation in the State Assembly.

The Commission headed by retired High Court judge Justice Shameem Akther submitted its recommendations to the sub-committee headed by state Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday.

The panel has recommended the introduction of a creamy layer suggesting that MLAs, MPs, ZP chairpersons, mayors and other public representatives, as well as those in government Group I services and similar positions, should be considered as the creamy layer.

The commission said the state government should take appropriate steps to exclude these people from availing the benefits of second-generation reservations, Reddy said.

The commission in its recommendations said the 59 Scheduled Caste (SC) communities can be divided into three groups viz I, II, and III for the total reservations of 15 per cent. —*PTI*

Producer Choudhary killed self due to depression: Cops

PANAJI, 4 FEB

Telugu film producer KP Choudhary has in his suicide note mentioned he was taking the extreme step due to depression and no one should be held responsible for his death, police said on Tuesday. As per the note, Choudhary was under depression for the past few days, they said. The body of Choudhary, 44, known for producing Rajinikanth-starrer 'Kabali' in Telugu, was found on Monday in the bedroom of the rented premises at Siolim village in North Goa. Police recovered a suicide note from the bedroom of the deceased. *—PTI*

Duo beat man to death for taking over in Mumbai

THANE, 4 FEB

A 45-year-old man was attacked and killed by two unidentified two-wheeler riders in a road rage incident in Navi Mumbai, police said on Tuesday. The police have registered a murder case in the attack that occurred in Kharghar on Sunday, an official said. He said the victim, Shivkumar Roshanlal Sharma, a resident of Vashi, was riding his two-wheeler on the Belpada-Utsav Chowk road when he allegedly cut in front of two people on a scooter. The official said that angered by the manoeuvre, the duo stopped Sharma's scooter and confronted him. One of them grabbed the victim, while the other hit him on the head with a helmet. He said Sharma collapsed on the spot, and passersby rushed him to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.*—PTI*

9 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, 4 FEB

Security forces arrested nine militants belonging to different banned outfits from Imphal East, Imphal West, Kakching and Thoubal districts, police said on Tuesday. Five members of the Kangleipak Communist Party (City Meitei) were arrested from Mantripukhri Thakurbari area of Imphal East district on Monday, they said. One 9mm pistol, a magazine, 11 live rounds of ammunition, two hand grenades, and three mobile phones, were seized from their possession. A member of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (MC) Progressive involved in extortion activities was arrested from Singjamei Thokchom Leikai in Imphal West district on Monday, police said. *—PTI*

Jawan collapses, dies during wrestling match

HAMIRPUR, 4 FEB

A 56-year-old home guard jawan Udham Singh died while participating in a wrestling match at the local Chhinj fair at Makker village. Chhinj fairs are organised in the state to promote local trade and sports like kushti (wrestling) and kabaddi. Other endurance sports are also organised as part of the fair and villagers join them in large numbers as spectators and participants. Singh, a resident of Dhudana village in Galore who joined the home guard in 1996, has been participating in these wrestling matches for the last 40 years. Police said Singh started stumbling and losing his balance during the match and eventually collapsed. The organisers and the spectators rushed to his help but his condition became critical and he was taken to the nearby Bhota Hospital. He was declared dead by the doctors after a medical examination, they said. *—PTI*

Waiting for muhurat?: SC to Assam over deportations

It says illegal immigrants should not be kept under detention

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

The court questioned Assam's explanation that deportation could not begin due to the detainees' unknown addresses in foreign countries *PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE PIC*

Supreme Court has sharply criticised the Assam government for its failure to deport individuals declared foreigners, holding them in detention centres indefinitely. The bench, comprising Justices Abhay S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan, expressed concern over the state's inaction, noting that once individuals are identified as foreigners, they must be deported immediately.

The court questioned Assam's explanation that deportation could not begin due to the detainees' unknown addresses in foreign countries. "Are you waiting for some muhurat (auspicious time)?" the bench asked, highlighting the absurdity of the delay. The court emphasised that the state must take immediate action and deport these individuals, regardless of the absence of an exact address.

The bench also criticised Assam's failure to send nationality verification forms to the Ministry of External Affairs, despite the detainees' nationality being known. "Once a person is declared a foreigner, you must take the next logical step," the court stated, referring to the indefinite detention of individuals in multiple foreigner detention centres in the state. The court directed Assam to initiate deportation proceedings for 63 declared foreign nationals and file a status report within two weeks.

Grilling Assam's Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, the bench questioned why detainees could not be deported to the capital city of their country, even if their exact foreign address was unknown. The court also pointed out that the state was burdening its exchequer by continuing to detain individuals for years without deportation.

Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, representing petitioners, informed the bench that Bangladesh had refused to accept the detainees as its citizens, leaving them stateless after being in detention for over a decade. He urged the court to demand transparency from both the Centre and the state.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta apologised for the lapses in the Assam government's affidavit and assured the court that he would engage with the Ministry of External Affairs to resolve the matter. The court has directed the Centre to provide details of deportations so far and explain how it plans to handle detainees whose nationality remains unclear.

The case is scheduled for another hearing on 25 February. *—PTI*

5 DEATHS SO FAR

5 new GBS cases in Maharashtra; tally touches 163

PUNE, 4 FEB

PHOTO: PTI

The tally of suspected Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) cases has reached 163 in Maharashtra after detection of the rare nerve disorder in five more persons in Pune, a health official said.

Five people have died so far from the ailment in the state, the official said on Monday.

"The number of confirmed GBS cases stands at 127. The 163 suspected cases comprise 32 from Pune city, 86 from newly added villages in Pune Municipal Corporation limits, 18 from Pimpri Chinchwad, 19 from Pune rural and eight from other districts," he said.

Of the 163 patients, 47 have been discharged till now, 47 were in ICU and 21 on ventilator support, the official said.

A total of 168 water samples from different parts of Pune city were sent for chemical and biological analysis to the Public Health Laboratory, he said, adding that samples from eight water sources were found to be contaminated.

- A total of 168 water samples from different parts of Pune city were sent for chemical and biological analysis to the Public Health Laboratory, he said, adding that samples from eight water sourc-

GBS is a rare condition in which a person's immune system attacks the peripheral nerves, resulting in muscle weakness, loss of sensation in the legs and/or arms, as well as problems in swallowing or breathing.

Severe cases can result in near-total paralysis. GBS is more common in adults and males, though people of all ages can be affected. *—PTI*

KNP is now home to 26 cheetahs, including 14 cubs *PHOTO: PTI*

CHEETAH VEERA GIVES BIRTH TO TWO CUBS IN KUNO

BHOPAL, 4 FEB

Cheetah Veera gave birth to two cubs at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district on Tuesday, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said.

With these births, KNP is now home to 26 cheetahs, including 14 cubs.

On 17 September, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released eight Namibian cheetahs – five females and three males – into enclosures at the KNP as part of the world's first intercontinental translocation of the big cats, seven decades after they became extinct in India due to hunting and habitat loss. *—PTI*

Madurai hill on edge as Hindu grp protests over non-veg food

MADURAI, 4 FEB

About eight activists from the Hindu Munnani have been detained by the police *PHOTO: PTI*

The scenic Thiruparankundram hill town, where the abode of Lord Subrahmanya graces devotees, has turned into a police citadel on Tuesday with over 4,000 police and officers from 10 districts taking control following the prohibitory orders clamped by the Madurai district administration.

About eight activists from the Hindu Munnani, which had announced an agitation today to protest against a section of people consuming non-vegetarian food on the mountain, have been detained by the police.

Though the temple on the hill top is dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya (Murugan), there's a Sikandar Badusha Dargah on the hill. Things had been normal in the town until a group of people allegedly consumed non-vegetarian food on the hillock much to the ire of the Hindu devotees.

Meanwhile, a Hindu Munnani leader said the district administration's decision to enforce prohibitory orders in Madurai had been challenged in the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court. Condemning the arrest and also the administration's decision, BJP senior leader H Raja said when the national agencies were involved in arresting terrorists hiding in Tamil Nadu, the state police resorted to arresting members of Hindu organisations that wanted to stage a peaceful protest on the Thiruparankundram hill. "This situation will change one day," he said. Terming the ban order as "suppression of democratic rights and feelings of devotees," Hindu Munnani state President Kadeshwara Subramaniam said his organisation would not hesitate to launch a freedom struggle for Hindus from Madurai. *—PTI*

Motorist booked for giving alms to beggar in Indore

INDORE, 4 FEB

A case has been registered against a motorist for allegedly giving Rs 10 to a beggar in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, where the administration has enforced a ban on begging and giving alms, police said on Tuesday.

This is the second such case registered in the city within a fortnight, an official said.

The guilty can be punished with imprisonment up to one year or a fine up to Rs 5,000 or both. The administration, which has set a target to make Indore the country's first beggar-free city, has imposed a legal ban on begging, giving alms and buying any goods from beggars. Earlier, an FIR was registered against an unidentified person who gave alms to a beggar in front of a temple on Khandwa Road on 23 January. Phool Singh, an officer of the administration's Beggary Eradication Team, said, "In the last six months, more than 600 people involved in begging in the city have been sent to shelter homes." *—PTI*

HC cracks down on inhumane transportation of cattle

CHENNAI, 4 FEB

PHOTO: PTI

Madras High Court has issued a series of stringent directives for the transportation of cattle, ensuring their well-being during long journeys. The order came after the dismissal of petitions by three individuals who sought interim custody of 117 cattle, rescued while being transported illegally and in inhumane conditions to Kerala for alleged slaughter.

The cattle were sent to goshalas after being found in poor health, without food, water, or adequate space in overcrowded lorries.

Justice M. Nirmal Kumar highlighted the violation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and Transport of Animal Rules, 1978. The court noted the cattle were transported in unsanitary conditions, with chilli flakes and chillies placed in their eyes to keep them awake.

The judge underscored the importance of adherence to the Transport of Animal Rules, specifying that no goods vehicle should carry more than six cattle, and each consignment must have a certificate from a qualified veterinary surgeon confirming the animals are fit for travel. The judge further mandated that vehicles must be clean, equipped with proper ventilation, and ramps designed to prevent cattle from slipping or falling. *—PTI*

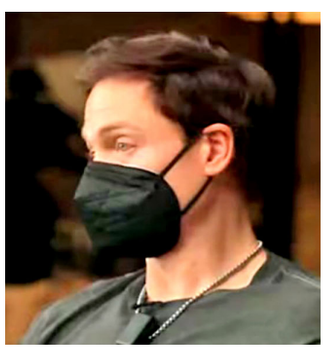
OFF THE TRACKS

A freight train rammed into a stationary goods train in UP's Fatehpur on Tuesday, leaving a loco pilot injured and derailment of the guard coach and engine. The loco pilot had allegedly fallen asleep at the wheel *PHOTO: PTI*

LEAVES KAMATH'S PODCAST

Air pollution normalised in India: Bryan

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB



Despite recording for Nikhil Kamath's podcast 'WTF' at a 5-star hotel with an air purifier, Bryan Johnson was unable to breathe *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Tech millionaire Bryan Johnson, known for his anti-ageing research, walked out of a podcast recording with Zerodha Co-Founder Nikhil Kamath due to poor air quality that had given him a rash on the skin. He said his eyes and throat were burning because of the bad air quality.

He questioned as to India's leaders do not make air quality a national emergency.

"I don't know what interests, money and power keep things the way they are but it's really bad for the entire country," he said on X.

Johnson said that air pollution is so normalised In India that no one even notices.

"People would be outside running. Babies and small children exposed from birth. No one wore a mask, which can significantly decrease exposure," Johnson remarked.

The 47-year-old, who follows a strict regimen of exercise, diet, and sleep while spending $2 million annually on health and wellness, recorded an episode for Kamath's podcast "WTF" at a five-star hotel. Despite wearing an N95 mask and having an air purifier, Johnson could not tolerate the room's air, which had an AQI of around 120. He noted that even though he had an air purifier, the air circulating from outside made it ineffective. By the time he left, the indoor AQI had climbed to 130, with PM2.5 levels at 75 micrograms per cubic meter—equivalent to smoking 3.4 cigarettes over 24 hours. Confirming the incident on X, Johnson stated, "When in India, I did end this podcast early due to the bad air quality." However, he praised Kamath as a "gracious host."

—Salar News

Most of Delhi's pollution locally created: Study

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

A recent study has revealed that pollution levels in Delhi-NCR during October-November are predominantly of local origin, with stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana contributing just 14% to the overall PM2.5 levels in 2022. The research, led by Japan's Research Institute for Humanity and Nature under the 'Aakash Project', examined fine particulate matter (PM2.5) data from September-November 2022 and 2023, using 30 sensors across Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi-NCR.

While stubble burning is often blamed for the spike in PM2.5 levels during these months, the study found that emissions from crop residue burning had a minimal impact on Delhi-NCR's air quality. It highlighted that PM2.5 levels remained stable in Delhi despite a 50% decline in stubble fires between 2015-2023.

The study pointed to the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which implements anti-pollution measures in stages, as a key factor in controlling pollution. Researchers found that PM2.5 levels correlated with the implementation of GRAP stages, with a reduction in emissions when GRAP-4 was in force. However, a rise in pollution was noted after GRAP-4 was revoked in both 2022 and 2023.

The research underscores the importance of continuous air quality monitoring to mitigate pollution in source, receptor, and intermediate regions. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Salman Rushdie to testify at his attacker's trial

MAYVILLE, 4 FEB

On 12 Augst, 2022, Salman Rushdie was about to deliver a lecture before a live audience in western New York when a man ran towards him and plunged a knife into the author's hand as he raised it in self-defence. "After that there are many blows, to my neck, to my chest, to my eye, everywhere," Rushdie recalled in a memoir that followed. "I feel my legs give way, and I fall." In the coming weeks, Rushdie will return to the same New York county to recount the experience as one of the first witnesses in the trial of Hadi Matar. Jury selection is scheduled to begin on Tuesday. Matar, 27, of Fairview, New Jersey, has pleaded not guilty to charges of attempted murder and assault. The attack left Rushdie blind in his right eye and his hand permanently damaged. *—PTI*

Unite for a free economy, Lankan Prez tells people

COLOMBO, 4 FEB

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Tuesday said that Sri Lanka must work in unison to achieve economic freedom rather than yield to vulnerabilities within the global economic system. Addressing the 77th Independence Day celebrations of the island nation, he said, "Collectively, we must persist in our struggle for freedom on behalf of this motherland...To secure our economic freedom, rather than succumbing to weakness in the global economic system and being overwhelmed by its every fluctuation, we must unite in our efforts for this motherland." In keeping with his government's policy of minimising state expenditures as Lanka struggles to emerge from the 2022 economic crisis, this year's celebrations saw a reduction in the usual pomp. *—PTI*

Islamabad to send back registered refugees to Afg

ISLAMABAD, 4 FEB

The Pakistan government has devised a plan to move registered Afghan refugees out of Islamabad and Rawalpindi and gradually repatriate them to their country. Authorities have also been directed to implement the plan without making any public announcement, Dawn newspaper reported quoting sources. It reported that the plan was finalised in a series of meetings presided by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last week. Under phase I of the relocation plan, Afghan nationals having the Afghan Citizens Card (ACC) will be "immediately" moved out of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. ACC is an identification document issued to registered Afghan nationals by Nadra. *—PTI*

Pak signs deal to defer $1.2B oil bill payment for Saudi

ISLAMABAD, 4 FEB

Pakistan government signed an agreement with the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) to defer by one year a USD 1.2B payment on oil imports. Radio Pakistan reported that Pakistan and SDF on Monday signed two financing agreements worth over one billion dollar. These agreements include "Deferred Payment for Oil Import from Saudi Arabia" worth USD 1.2B for one year and "Construction of Gravity Flow Water Supply Scheme" at Mansehra amounting to USD 41M. Secretary Economic Affairs Dr Kazim Niaz and Chief Executive Officer Saudi Fund for Development Sultan Abdulrahman Al-Marshad signed the agreements. Among others, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki witnessed the signing ceremony. *—PTI*

Trump's tariffs a violation of WTO regulations, says China

Country warns US move will damage economic and trade ties

BEIJING, 4 FEB

China on Tuesday said it would implement a 15 per cent tariff on coal and liquefied natural gas products as well as a 10 per cent tariff on crude oil, agricultural machinery and large-engine cars imported from the US.

The tariffs would take effect from next Monday.

"The US's unilateral tariff increase seriously violates the rules of the World Trade Organisation," China's State Council Tariff Commission said. "It is not only unhelpful in solving its own problems, but also damages normal economic and trade cooperation between China and the US."

China is the world's largest importer of liquefied natural gas, with its top suppliers being Australia, Qatar and Malaysia. The US, which is the biggest exporter of LNG globally, does not significantly export LNG to China.

China also announced export controls on several elements critical to the production of modern high-tech products. They include tungsten, tellurium, bismuth, molybdenum and indium, many of which are designated as critical minerals by the US Geological Survey, meaning they are essential to US economic or national security that has supply chains vulnerable to disruption. The export controls are in addition to ones China placed in December on key elements such as gallium used in manufacturing.

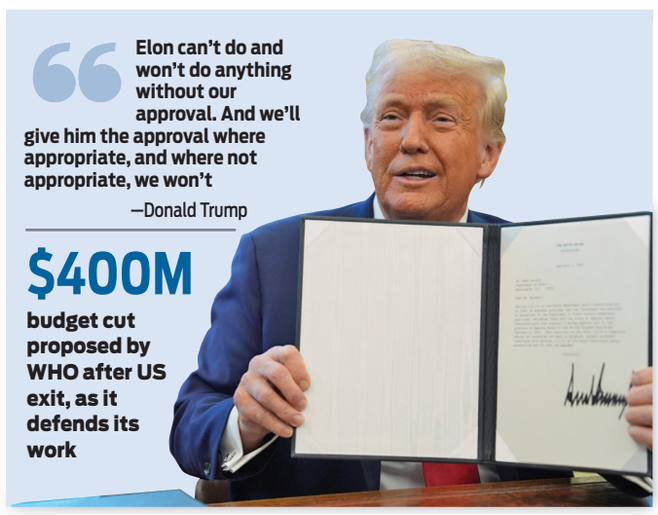
Meanwhile, Trump held off on his tariff threats against Mexico and Canada for 30 days after the two US neighbours agreed to boost border security efforts.

Trump on Saturday had directed that 25 per cent tariffs on most imports from the two American partners — and 10 per cent on Canadian energy products — go into effect at Tuesday midnight. The two nations threatened retaliation, raising the prospects of a broader regional trade war.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau posted on X that on a call with Trump, he pledged additional cooperation on border security. It follows similar moves by Mexico earlier Monday.

Meanwhile, Philippine and US fighter aircraft held a joint patrol and training Tuesday over a disputed South China Sea shoal, where Chinese jets fired flares last year to drive away a Philippine aircraft, officials said. *—PTI*

Russian wooden dolls called Matryoshka depicting Xi Jinping (L) and Donald Trump at a souvenir shop in St. Petersburg, Russia **PHOTO: X**


Elon can't do and won't do anything without our approval. And we'll give him the approval where appropriate, and where not appropriate, we won't
—Donald Trump
$400M
budget cut proposed by WHO after US exit, as it defends its work

EL SALVADOR TO ACCEPT ALL US DEPORTEES: RUBIO

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio says El Salvador's president has offered to accept deportees from the US of any nationality as well as violent American criminals now imprisoned in the United States. President Nayib Bukele "has agreed to the most unprecedented, extraordinary migratory agreement anywhere in the world," Rubio said. *—PTI*

TRUMP EYES UKRAINE'S 'RARE EARTH' ELEMENTS

President Donald Trump on Monday indicated that he wants to reach an agreement with Ukraine to gain access to the country's rare earth materials as a condition for continuing US support for its war against Russia. "We're looking to do a deal with Ukraine where they're going to secure what we're giving them with their rare earth and other things," Trump said. *—PTI*

Trump, Netanyahu to discuss fragile peace in Gaza

WASHINGTON, 4 FEB

President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are set to meet on Tuesday as Netanyahu grapples with conflicting pressures from his right-wing coalition to end a temporary ceasefire with Hamas and a war-weary public demanding the release of hostages and an end to the 15-month conflict.

Trump expressed doubts on the ceasefire's sustainability, stating, "I have no guarantees that the peace is going to hold." The talks will focus on advancing a long-anticipated Israel-Saudi Arabia normalisation deal and addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions, with the next phase of the hostage negotiation at the forefront.

Netanyahu's visit marks his first international travel since the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for him in November, complicating his political standing amid ongoing corruption allegations.

Despite hard-right coalition members pushing for resumed fighting to eliminate Hamas, Netanyahu asserts Israel's commitment to a decisive victory and hostage return. Amidst these tensions, hostage families, such as that of Matan Zangauker, urge Trump to use American influence to maintain peace efforts.

Additionally, Trump has suggested relocating Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt or Jordan, proposals met with resistance from regional leaders, complicating prospects for Saudi normalisation. Experts suggest pivotal decisions during this meeting could reshape US.-Israeli relations and the Middle East landscape. *—PTI*

6 injured in West Bank firing, gunman killed

JERUSALEM, 4 FEB

At least six people were injured in a shooting at a checkpoint in the Israeli-occupied West Bank early Tuesday morning, according to the Israeli military and area hospitals.

The Israeli military said an attacker fired at soldiers at a checkpoint in the village of Tayasir, which is in the northern West Bank. In a tense exchange, soldiers returned fire and the attacker was killed, the military added.

Hospitals said they received six people injured in the shooting. Israeli media reported the injured are soldiers and at least two of them were critically injured.

Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group praised the attack but neither claimed responsibility for it.

Israel has carried out an extensive operation in nearby Jenin over the past weeks to clamp down on what Israel said is militant activity in the city, as soldiers and armored bulldozers have caused widespread damage and destroyed scores of homes.

Palestinian officials have not released a total death toll, but say Israeli fire has killed at least 20 Palestinians since the start of the raid. *—PTI*

Israeli soldiers stand guard at a checkpoint near Tayasir village in northern West Bank, where an attacker fired at an army base on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

30 bunkers razed in Pakistan's Kurram district

PESHAWAR, 4 FEB

Over 30 bunkers have been demolished in Pakistan's strife-torn Kurram district in line with a peace agreement reached between warring Sunni and Shia tribes, officials said on Tuesday.

The peace accord was signed between Alizai and Bagan tribes on 4 January after sectarian clashes resulted in the killing of 133 people in the district between 21 November and 2 December.

Under the agreement, residents pledged to surrender their weapons to the state in different phases within 15 days, while the dismantling of local bunkers is set to be completed by February end.

Authorities demolished the bunkers by detonating them with explosives, said district administration officials involved in the process. The demolition process was started on 10 January.

There are more than 250 bunkers in the lower and upper Kurram district.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government Spokesman Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said the demolition of the bunkers was necessary for maintaining public order in the district.

Many locals were hopeful that this exercise would restore lasting peace to the region.

Since the beginning of the clashes, food and medicine shortages have also been reported due to weeks-long road blockades in the region.

According to official sources, 453 vehicles with supplies of edibles and other essential items have been transported in Kurram so far, while relief amounts are also being distributed among the affected people. *—PTI*

Kyiv reviews security after Russian strike on nuclear site

KYIV, 4 FEB

Moscow's renewed attacks on Ukraine's electricity infrastructure this winter have heightened scrutiny over the Ukrainian Energy Ministry's failure to protect the country's most critical energy facilities near nuclear power sites.

Despite more than a year of warnings that the sites were vulnerable to potential Russian attacks, the Energy Ministry failed to act swiftly, officials said.

Two years of Russian strikes on its power grid have left Ukraine reliant on nuclear power for more than half of its electricity generation.

Especially vulnerable are the unprotected nuclear switchyards located outside the perimeters of its three functioning nuclear plants, which are crucial to transmitting power from the reactors to the rest of the country.

"The switchyards that handle electrical routing from nuclear power plants are a vital component of Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Given Ukraine's heavy reliance on nuclear energy, military attacks on these switchyards would be devastating, severely impacting civilian life and undermining the resilience of the energy grid," said Marcy R. Fowler, research head at Open Nuclear Network, a wing of US firm -based NGO PAX Sapiens that focuses on reducing nuclear risk. *—PTI*

Congo rebels declare unilateral ceasefire

GOMA, 4 FEB

The Rwanda-backed rebels, who seized eastern Congo's key city of Goma, announced on Monday a unilateral ceasefire in the region for humanitarian reasons, following calls for a safe corridor for aid and hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

The M23 rebels said the ceasefire would start on Tuesday. The announcement came shortly after the UN health agency said at least 900 people were killed in last week's fighting in Goma between the rebels and Congolese forces.

Goma is at the heart of a region home to trillions of dollars in mineral wealth, and after consolidating control of the city last week, the rebels were reported to be gaining the upper hand in other areas of eastern Congo and another provincial capital, Bukavu.

The rebels said on Monday that they would halt fighting to allow humanitarian activities and that they did not intend to seize Bukavu, though they earlier have expressed ambition to march on the capital.

"It must be made clear that we have no intention of capturing Bukavu or other areas. However, we reiterate our commitment to protecting and defending the civilian population and our positions," M23 rebel spokesman Lawrence Kanyuka said in a statement.

There was no immediate comment from Congo's government. The announcement came ahead of a joint summit this week by the regional blocs of southern and eastern Africa, which have called for a ceasefire. *—PTI*

Red Cross personnel load the bodies of victims after a gunfight between Congolese forces and M23 rebels in a truck in Goma city **PHOTO: PTI**

200 quakes rock Greece's 'Insta island' of Santorini

ATHENS, 4 FEB

PHOTO: X

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis appealed for calm as hundreds of earthquakes rattled the residents of Santorini island and its neighbours in the Aegean Sea. Records from the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre showed the quakes were continuing to occur a few minutes apart as of 7am on Tuesday, with the largest recorded at magnitude 5.1 on Monday afternoon.

Mitsotakis said authorities have been monitoring a "very intense" geological phenomenon over recent days, before urging "our islanders above all to remain calm".

Thousands of locals and holidaymakers have crowded onto ferries and flights to leave Santorini and the neighbouring islands of Anafi, Ios and Amorgos, amid fears the tremors, which have so far caused minimal damage and no injuries, could indicate a larger earthquake is coming.

The picturesque crescent-shaped Santorini island is home to a dormant volcano, but an expert committee set up to monitor the situation said an estimated 200 quakes of magnitude 3 or more had been registered, but stressed the phenomenon was "not linked to volcanic activity".

Prominent Greek seismologist Gerasimos Papadopoulos cautioned that the current earthquake sequence – displayed on live seismic maps as a growing cluster of dots between the islands of Santorini, Ios, Amorgos, and Anafi – could indicate a larger impending event. *—Agencies*

WIFE PARTNER IN CRIME

New Zealand woman sues British author Gaiman for sexual assault

MADISON, 4 FEB

A woman from New Zealand has filed three civil lawsuits against best-selling British author Neil Gaiman and his wife, accusing Gaiman of repeatedly sexually assaulting her while she was working as the couple's babysitter and nanny.

Scarlett Pavlovich filed the lawsuits in federal court in Wisconsin, Massachusetts and New York on Monday. She alleged that she was homeless and living on a beach when she met Palmer in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2020. She was 22 years old at the time.

According to the lawsuits, Gaiman's wife Amanda Palmer invited Pavlovich to the couple's home on Waiheke Island. Pavlovich began running errands for the couple, babysitting their son and helping with chores, eventually becoming the couple's nanny.

Gaiman first sexually assaulted her the night they met in February 2022, according to the lawsuits. The assaults continued but she kept working for the couple because she was broke and homeless and Gaiman had told her he would help her writing career, according to the lawsuits.

When she told Palmer about the assaults, Palmer told her that more than a dozen women had told her in the past that Gaiman had sexually abused them, according to the lawsuits.

The assaults did not stop until Pavlovich told Palmer she was going to kill herself, the lawsuits said. She left the family and became homeless again, although the documents say Gaiman eventually paid her for her work caring for the couple's child and helped cover her rent for a few months.

Palmer presented Pavalovich to Gaiman knowing he would assault her, according the lawsuits. *—PTI*

Neil Gaiman **PHOTO: X**

Markets stage recovery as Trump pauses tariffs

ITC Hotels, Zomato, Nestle & Maruti were among laggards

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 2 per cent on Tuesday in line with a recovery in Asian peers after US President Donald Trump delayed tariffs on Mexico and Canada for a month.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,397.07 points or 1.81 per cent to settle at a month's high of 78,583.81. During the day, it surged 1,471.85 points or 1.90 per cent to 78,658.59. The NSE Nifty soared 378.20 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,739.25, a level not seen since 3 January.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Larsen & Toubro rallied nearly 5 per cent. Adani Ports, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement and Asian Paints were also among the major gainers. ITC Hotels, Zomato, Nestle and Maruti were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended significantly higher. European markets were trading mostly lower. US markets ended in the negative territory on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dropped 1.05 per cent to USD 75.16 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,958.37 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. The BSE bellwether index Sensex declined 319.22 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 77,186.74 on Monday, snapping its five-day rally. The Nifty declined 121.10 points or 0.52 per cent to 23,361.05 *—PTI*

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,397.07 points or 1.81 per cent to settle at a month's high of 78,583.81

The NSE Nifty soared 378.20 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,739.25, a level not seen since 3 January *PHOTO: PTI*

Rupee recovers 3P from all-time low to close at 87.08

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

The rupee recovered 3 paise from its all-time low level to close at 87.08 (provisional) against US dollar on Tuesday, as the American currency index retreated from its elevated level after President Donald Trump agreed to pause tariffs on Mexico and Canada. Forex traders said the US dollar index, which had surged past 109.88 level, retreated to 108 level after Trump announced the temporary pause on tariffs for 30 days. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.98 and touched an intraday low of 87.13 against the American currency during the session. The local unit finally settled at 87.08 (provisional), higher by 3 paise over its previous close. *—PTI*

SEBI nod to IPOs for SMPP, Brigade Hotel & 6 others

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

Eight companies, including defence manufacturer SMPP, Brigade Hotel, and Kumar Arch Tech, have received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to raise over Rs 6,500 crore through initial public offerings (IPOs). The other firms included in this approval are Solarworld Energy Solutions, Indogulf Cropsciences, Globe Civil Projects, and Prostarm Info Systems. SEBI's endorsement came after the companies submitted preliminary IPO documents between October and November, with feedback issued between January 28 and 31. SMPP's Rs 4,000-crore IPO features a fresh issue of equity shares worth up to Rs 580 crore and shares valued at Rs 3,420 crore. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Shantanu Naidu appointed as GM at Tata Motors

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

Shantanu Naidu has been appointed General Manager and Head of Strategic Initiatives at Tata Motors. Sharing the news on LinkedIn, Naidu posted an emotional note, reflecting on his journey: "I remember when my father used to walk home from the Tata Motors plant... It comes full circle now." An engineering graduate from Savitribai Phule Pune University (2014) and an MBA from Cornell University (2016), Naidu began working as Ratan Tata's assistant in 2018. Their unique friendship has often made headlines, including a viral video of Naidu singing a birthday song for Tata. Naidu's innovative work to protect stray dogs first caught Tata's attention, leading to a mentorship that grew into a close bond. Tata also supported Naidu's venture, Goodfellows, and even waived his education loan in his will. *—Agencies*

Bajaj Electricals Q3 profit falls 10.7 pc to ₹33.36 crore

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Bajaj Electricals Ltd on Tuesday reported a decline of 10.7 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 33.36 crore for the third quarter ended on December 31, 2024. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 37.36 crore in the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Bajaj Electricals. However, its revenue from operations climbed 5 per cent to Rs 1,289.72 crore during the quarter under review. The same stood at Rs 1,228.24 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. Bajaj Electricals' total expenses in the December quarter was Rs 1,257.09 crore, up 3 per cent. Its revenue from Consumer Products (CP) rose 8.54 per cent to Rs 1,038.45 crore, against Rs 956.66 crore in the corresponding quarter of the preceding fiscal *—PTI*

'CLOSURE NOT DUE TO THREATS'

We stand by Adani report, says Hindenburg's Nate

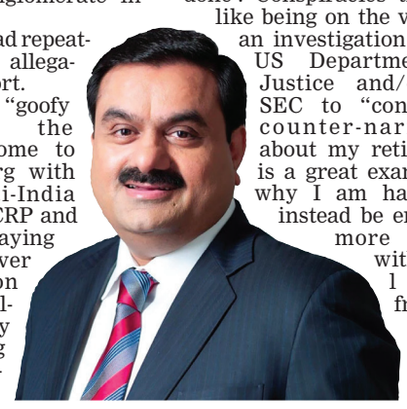
NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Activist short-seller Nathan Anderson, known for his high-profile campaigns against the likes of Adani Group, said he is closing his firm, Hindenburg Research, not because of any threat - legal or otherwise - and that he stands by all its reports.

Anderson told PTI that Hindenburg's January 2023 report accusing Adani Group of "the largest con in corporate history" was a result of following "red flags" raised against the conglomerate in media reports.

Adani group had repeatedly denied all allegations in the report.

He termed as "goofy conspiracy" the attempts by some to link Hindenburg with alleged anti-India groups like OCCRP and George Soros, saying his outlet never commented on them as it followed the policy of not feeding into "silly conspiracy theories".



Asked why he chose to shut down Hindenburg when he could have stepped back and passed on the reins of the company to someone else, he said there is "no way to separate me from the brand."

"Hindenburg is basically synonymous with me," he said. "If it was a software application or a bicycle factory you can sell the application or the factory. But when it's research driven by me, you can't really just hand that off, and so I would not actually be 'done'. Conspiracies theories like being on the verge of an investigation by the US Department of Justice and/or US SEC to "concoct a counter-narrative about my retirement is a great example of why I am happy to instead be enjoying more time with family, friends. *—PTI*

Gold hits fresh peak, moves closer to ₹86K mark

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Gold prices extended the rally for the fifth straight session and rose Rs 500 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 85,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid robust demand from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 85,300 per 10 grams in the previous session.

In this year, gold has surged Rs 6,410 or 8.07 per cent to Rs 85,800 per 10 grams from Rs 79,390 per 10 grams on 1 January.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also climbed for the fifth straight session and gained Rs 500 to hit another record high of Rs 85,400 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Silver prices, however, snapped a five-day winning streak and fell Rs 500 to Rs 95,500 per kg against Monday's closing level of Rs 96,000 per kg.

In futures trade, gold on the MCX for April delivery declined Rs 208 or 0.25 per cent to Rs 83,075 per 10 grams.

Silver futures for March delivery also slipped Rs 35 to Rs 94,222 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Comex gold futures for April delivery fell USD 17 per ounce or 0.60 per cent to USD 2,840.10 per ounce.

On Monday, the yellow metal futures had hit a fresh high of USD 2,872 per ounce. *—PTI*

LISTING AT RS 396. 90

Dr Agarwal's shares decline 1% in mkt debut

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Dr Agarwal's Health Care Ltd experienced a subdued debut on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) on Tuesday, listing at Rs 396.90, a decline of 1.26 per cent from its issue price of Rs 402. During morning trading, the stock reached a high of Rs 412.75 and a low of Rs 376.40. In contrast, at the National Stock Exchange (NSE), it listed at the issue price of Rs 402.

The company boasts a market valuation of Rs 11,929.20 crore. The initial public offering (IPO) of Dr Agarwal's Health Care Ltd was met with a subscription rate of 1.55 times by the closing day of bidding on Friday. The public issue, amounting to Rs 3,027.26 crore, was priced within a band of Rs 382-402 per share.

The IPO included a fresh issue of up to Rs 300 crore and an Offer-for-Sale (OFS) of up to 6.78 crore equity shares valued at Rs 2,727.26 crore from promoters and other selling shareholders at the upper end of the price band. Funds from the fresh issuance will be directed towards debt repayment, alongside allocations for general corporate purposes and potential acquisitions.

Dr Agarwal's Health Care offers diverse services, including cataract and refractive surgeries, consultations, diagnoses, non-surgical treatments, and products related to eye care. By September 2024, it operated 193 facilities, primarily concentrated in South India, in Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru, *—PTI*

Govt says in 5 yrs, 339 foreign firms registered in India

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

The government on Tuesday said 339 foreign companies have been registered in the country in the last five years and the registration of such firms has been on the decline since 2020.

This year, five foreign companies have been registered -- 1 each in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Kerala and two in Tamil Nadu, official data shared by Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Harsh Malhotra with the Rajya Sabha showed. Under Section 2 (42) of the Companies Act, 2013, a foreign company means any company or body corporate incorporated outside India, which has a place of business in India whether by itself or through an agent, physically or through electronic mode.

While 90 foreign companies were set up in 2020, the number came down to 75 in 2021 and 64 in 2022.

The count reduced to 57 in 2023 and 53 in 2024.

On whether certain foreign companies/ entities are conducting online activities without getting themselves registered, Malhotra said no such information is available under MCA21 registry. *—PTI*

PERPLEXITY AI CEO CONFIRMS BID FOR TIKTOK'S US BIZZ

CALIFORNIA, 4 FEB

Perplexity AI CEO Aravind Srinivas has confirmed the company's bid for TikTok's US operations. Speaking to Fox News, Srinivas said the deal would appeal to both investors and President Donald Trump, proposing an ownership stake for US government.

According to the Associated Press, Perplexity AI's proposal to ByteDance suggests creating a new entity combining TikTok's US platform with Perplexity's business, allowing the US government to own up to 50 per cent. This stake would materialize after an initial public offering (IPO) valued at $300 billion or more.

The app had briefly gone dark last month after the ban by the previous Biden administration had set in.

Trump signed an executive order to establish a government-owned investment fund aimed from TikTok if a US buyer is secured. Treasury Secretary Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard will oversee fund's development. *—Agencies*

India extends $37.64M to UN Budget for 2025

UNITED NATIONS, 4 FEB

India has made a significant contribution of USD 37.64 million to the United Nations Regular Budget for 2025, joining a prestigious group of 35 member states that have fulfilled their regular budget assessments in full and on time. This payment, made on 31 January, 2025, demonstrates India's consistent commitment to its financial obligations to the UN.

According to the UN Committee on Contributions, as of 31 January, 2025, 35 member states had settled their regular budget assessments within the specified 30-day period outlined in UN financial regulations. Stephane Dujarric, Spokesperson for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, acknowledged this achievement in a daily press briefing, expressing gratitude towards India for its timely contribution.

- This commitment reinforces India's position as a key player in the global arena

UN General Assembly President Philemon Yang, who is visiting India from February 4-8, recently remarked that India continues to play its role as a responsible UN member by consistently meeting its financial commitments. This commitment reinforces India's position as a key player in the global arena, underlining its dedication to supporting the UN's mission and objectives. *—PTI*

Chhattisgarh procures 149 lakh tonnes of paddy, breaks record

RAIPUR, 4 FEB

More than 149 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured from farmers under the support price scheme in the current Kharif season in Chhattisgarh, which is higher than the previous record of 144.92 lakh tonnes in 2023-24, officials said on Tuesday.

The two-and-a-half-month-long paddy procurement drive at minimum support price (MSP), which began on November 14 last year, concluded on January 31, an official from the state public relations department said.

He said, "An all-time high record was created with the purchase of 149.25 LMT of paddy from 25,49,592 farmers."

Nearly 84.44 lakh metric tonnes of paddy procured till date; 10 more days remaining for paddy procurement *PHOTO: PTI*

The official said the government has disbursed Rs 31,089 crore to farmers' bank accounts against paddy procurement.

As per data shared by the government, Mahasamund topped the list with the highest purchase of 11.04 LMT (lakh metric tonnes) of paddy, followed by Bemetara with 9.38 LMT and Balodabazar-Bhatapara 8.56 LMT. *—PTI*

EXPORTERS ARE WINNERS

'India may gain from US-China tariff war'

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

The trade war between the US and China is expected to benefit Indian exporters in increasing their shipments to the American market, sources said.

They said the country was the fourth-largest gainer when the US imposed higher duties on Chinese goods during US President Trump's tenure.

After coming to power again, Trump on Saturday signed an order to impose stiff tariffs on imports from China, fulfilling a campaign promise but raising the prospect of increased prices for consumers.

"India is likely to gain out of this trade war. Significant rise in exports are expected from India," a source said.

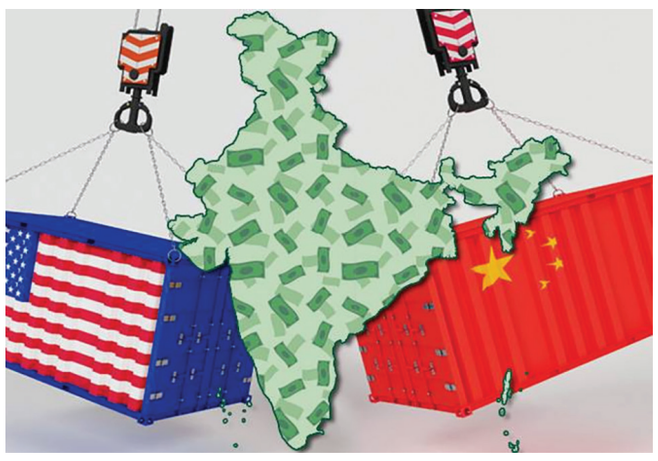


PHOTO: X

Exporters have also stated that the imposition of customs duties by the US on imports from China provides huge opportunities for India to America. *—PTI*

'India to assess OECD tax deal'

India is reassessing the merits of joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development global tax deal following the United States' decision to withdraw, rendering the agreement "impractical" to implement, said to Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey. However, concerns abound that US tax regulations may conflict with the proposed global minimum tax.

OYO to invest £50M for hotel expansion in UK

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Travel tech unicorn OYO has announced plans to invest £50 million (approximately £539.57 crore) in the UK over the next three years, with a focus on bolstering its premium hotel portfolio.

The investment is expected to create 1,000 jobs in the UK hospitality sector during this period.

In a strategic shift, OYO is prioritising premiumisation of its UK offerings, moving towards long-term leasehold and management contracts to enhance its inventory. The company is engaged in advanced discussions with several major hotel chains and real estate firms regarding potential asset management transactions.

"OYO's investment in premium hotels will bolster our tourism infrastructure and aid our ambitious 'Showcase Britain' initiative, driving economic growth," said Baroness Poppy Gustafsson OBE, UK Minister for Investment.

Puneet Yadav, Country Head of OYO UK, noted that the company, which entered the UK market in 2018, continues to cater to budget travellers but is now pivoting towards premium properties. *—PTI*

Sumit Nagal enters pre-quarters of Rosario Challenger

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal progressed to the pre-quarterfinals after a hard-fought win over local favourite Renzo Olivo at the 2025 Rosario Challenger in Rosario, Argentina. Nagal, seeded eighth, displayed determination and grit to rally his way to a 5-7, 6-1, 6-0 win over Olivo on Monday. The 27-year-old Indian will next face the winner of the match between Chinese Taipei's Tseng Chun-hsin and Bolivian Hugo Dellien —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Johnson's grand slam track inks live streaming deal

BURBANK, 4 FEB

Michael Johnson's new track league has struck a media deal for Peacock to stream all the action live and The CW to broadcast the weekend races during the four events in 2025. The Grand Slam Track League has signed 48 racers, including Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and Gabby Thomas, to compete in a four-event circuit beginning 4 April in Kingston, Jamaica. Johnson, the four-time Olympic gold medalist, has raised upward of $30 million and the league is promising $100,000 first prizes and a prize pool of more than $12.6 million in addition to undisclosed amounts to those who participate in the season-long series. The move gives NBC Sports, the Olympic rights holder that operates Peacock, a foothold in track and field after not renewing its deal to stream track's Diamond League meets after last year. —*PTI*

Shillong new ISL venue for NEUFC vs Mumbai City

SHILLONG, 4 FEB

A new venue will be added to the Indian Super League (ISL) when Shillong hosts NorthEast United FC's 'home' match against Mumbai City FC on Friday at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The football loving fans of Meghalaya have been waiting for this ISL's debut match with much anticipation. The Guwahati-based Highlanders will also host Bengaluru FC and East Bengal at the same venue here on 21 February and 8 March, respectively, as the fans look forward to witness Indian football's biggest stars, including Sunil Chhetri, Lallianzuala Chhangte and Naorem Mahesh Singh in action. —*PTI*

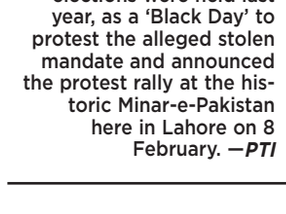


PHOTO: X

Pak Army to guard NZ, SA cricketers during Imran's stir

LAHORE, 4 FEB

Starting Wednesday, Pakistan Army and Rangers personnel will be deployed in Lahore for fool-proof security for the international cricket teams ahead of the tri-nation cricket series starting 8 February, the same day jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party has planned a protest. Khan, 72, has been lodged at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since mid-2023 in multiple cases and his party has been at loggerheads with the federal government since the general elections in February 2024. His party, PTI, has already declared that it would observe 8 February, when elections were held last year, as a 'Black Day' to protest the alleged stolen mandate and announced the protest rally at the historic Minar-e-Pakistan here in Lahore on 8 February. —*PTI*

Virat & Rohit's form key to India in CT, says Raina

Pak hosts event, but India will play all matches in Dubai

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

They may have struggled in recent times but the form of skipper Rohit Sharma and his longtime colleague Virat Kohli will be key to India's success in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy, reckoned former batter Suresh Raina on Tuesday.

The Champions Trophy starts in Pakistan from 19 February and will concluded on 9 March but India will play all their matches in Dubai as per the hybrid model agreement signed by the concerned parties.

Speaking to broadcaster Star Sports, Raina said, "Rohit Sharma's strike rate has improved significantly after the ODI World Cup in 2023. Since then, he has scored runs at a strike rate of 119-120, making him one of India's best ODI batsmen.

"For Rohit and Virat, I would say that when you have a strong record of past performances, it gives you a lot of confidence. They complement each other well, and both have the skill to score big runs. If they perform well, India's Champions Trophy campaign will benefit immensely."

India have been clubbed with arch-rivals Pakistan, New Zealand and Bangladesh in the group stage of the tournament.

Before the Champions Trophy, India are also playing a three-match ODI series at home against England, and Raina believed it will help the likes of Kohli and Rohit to get some valuable game time before the mega event. —*PTI*

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli

WITH CT IN MIND, VARUN ADDED TO INDIAN ODI SQUAD

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

In-form mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy has been included in the Indian ODI squad after his heroics in the just-concluded T20I series against England as the team management wants the KKR mystery spinner to "keep up the momentum".

There is a fair chance that Chakravarthy might just replace one of the four specialist spinners in the Champions Trophy squad. It could be one among Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar, who could be axed to accommodate Chakravarthy before the final squad is announced.

A lot will depend on how he fares in the ODIs. Chakravarthy, who got 14 wickets in five T20Is against England and was adjudged the 'Player of The Series', hasn't been picked for the three ODIs against England and the Champions Trophy later this month.

"Yes, Varun Chakravarthy is part of the squad," India vice-captain Shubman Gill confirmed in a media interaction after the team's training. —*PTI*

NATIONAL GAMES 2025

K'taka wins 22 Golds in swimming, Srihari & Dhinidhi shine

HALDWANI, 4 FEB

Karnataka's star swimmers Srihari Nataraj and Dhinidhi Desinghu ended their National Games campaigns with nine gold each as their state picked up a phenomenal 22 yellow metals from the pool at the conclusion of competition here on Tuesday.

Desinghu, the 14-year-old swimming sensation, won the women's 100m freestyle event with a Games record time of 57.34 seconds -- bettering her own earlier mark of 57.87 seconds set in the 2023 Goa edition -- while Nataraj took the men's 100m freestyle title with a time of 50.65 seconds.

Desinghu and Nataraj, both Paris Olympians, later teamed up to help Karnataka win the mixed 4x100m medley gold with a time of 4 minutes and 3.91 seconds to end at the same number of gold medals.

The 24-year-old Nataraj ended the campaign with 10 medals, having earlier won seven gold -- 50m backstroke, mixed 4x100m freestyle, 200m freestyle, 4x100m freestyle relay, 4x100m freestyle relay medley, 4x200m freestyle relay and 100m backstroke -- and a silver -- 50m freestyle.

Karnataka's fourth gold of the day came from Vidith S Shankar who took the top spot in the men's 100m breaststroke with a time of 1 minute and 3.97 seconds.

In total, Karnataka won 37 medals (22 gold, 10 silver, 5 bronze) in an overwhelmingly dominant performance from the pool. Maharashtra was second with 5 gold, 11 silver and 12 bronze. —PTI

Srihari Nataraj finished with ten medals including eight gold, one silver and bronze PHOTO: X

Suryakumar, Dube in Mumbai's Ranji QF squad against Haryana

MUMBAI, 4 FEB

Mumbai has announced its 18-member squad for the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Haryana, commencing on February 8, with Suryakumar Yadav and Shivam Dube making the cut. The duo recently participated in the India-England T20I series, where India emerged victorious with a 4-1 series win. Both players have each featured in one match for Mumbai during the ongoing Ranji Trophy season.

Mumbai secured their place in the quarters after their victory against Meghalaya by an innings and 456 runs. They will be facing a formidable Haryana side, who topped Group C, at the Chaudhary Bansi Lal Cricket Stadium in Rohtak.

PHOTO: PTI

Yadav represented Mumbai in their October clash against Maharashtra, while Dube was a part of the star-studded squad that included India's Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma, which faced defeat to Jammu and Kashmir last month at home.

The squad also sees the inclusion of uncapped player Harsh Tanna, who has played four List A matches to date.

Mumbai Squad: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Amogh Bhatkal, Suryakumar Yadav, Siddhesh Lad, Shivam Dube, Akash Anand (wk), Hardik Tamore (wk), Suryansh Shedge, Shardul Thakur, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Mohit Avasthi, Sylvester D'Souza, Royston Dias, Atharva Ankolekar and Harsh Tanna. —*PTI*

National Games: Anmol wins gold, Satish bags 2 titles

DEHRADUN, 4 FEB

Rising shuttler Anmol Kharb of Haryana continued her impressive run to win gold in women's singles while Tamil Nadu's Satish Kumar Karunakaran claimed the men's singles as well as doubles title at the 38th National Games here on Tuesday. Kharb defeated top seed Anupama Upadhyaya in straight games in the women's singles final to claim the gold medal.

The 18-year-old, a member of the gold medal-winning Indian team at the Asia Team Championships, showcased her skill and determination by outclassing world number 43 Anupama 21-16, 22-20 to secure the top prize.

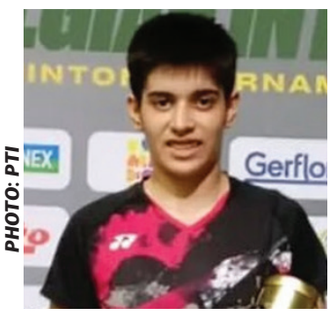


PHOTO: PTI

In the men's singles final, top seed Karunakaran beat Suryaksh Rawat of Uttarakhand 21-17 21-17 in a dominating performance to win gold on the final day of badminton competitions. In the men's doubles, Nithin HV and Prakash Raj S defeated Vaibhav and Ashith Surya 21-16, 21-14 in a one-sided all-Karnataka final to take home the coveted gold. Karnataka pair of Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat won gold in the women's doubles after beating Angel Punera and Anya Bisht of Uttarakhand 21-11 21-13 in final.

Star shuttler and home state favourite Lakshya Sen, withdrew from the competition at the last moment. —*PTI*

Veteran SL batter Karunaratne to retire

GALLE, 4 FEB

Former Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne has announced his retirement from international cricket following his 100th Test, which begins against Australia here on Thursday.

The 36-year-old has had a distinguished career, accumulating 7,172 runs at an average of just under 40, with 16 centuries and 34 half-centuries across 99 matches over nearly 14 years.

Additionally, he has played 50 ODIs, scoring 1,316 runs, including one century and 11 fifties.

Karunaratne cited difficulties in maintaining motivation in a reduced Test calendar as a factor in his decision.

"In the last two to three years, with the World Test Championship introduced, we've seen less bilateral series," he explained.

He plans to move to Australia with his family next month after playing his final first-class match for the Sinhalese Sports Club against NCC from February 14-16.

Reflecting on his decision, Karunaratne noted discussions with fellow senior players, Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal, emphasising their approach to retiring individually rather than all at once. He stated, "I am happy with what I have achieved so far... appearing in 100 Tests feels like a significant achievement."

Despite recent struggles with form—he scored 7 and 0 in the first Test against Australia—he is content to leave the game on a high note. —*PTI*

People may prefer Messi, but I'm complete footballer: Ronaldo

UNITED KINGDOM, 4 FEB

Cristiano Ronaldo, widely regarded as one of the greatest footballers of all time, has boldly claimed that he is the "most complete football player" in history. In an interview with Spanish media outlet LaSexta TV, the Al-Nassr star acknowledged that while fans may prefer legends like Lionel Messi, Pele, or Maradona, he firmly believes no one surpasses him in overall ability.

"I think I'm the most complete football player that has ever existed. People may like Messi, Maradona or Pele. I respect that, but I'm the most complete," he said. "I haven't seen anyone better than me in football history, and I'm speaking from the heart."

Despite years of fierce rivalry with Messi, Ronaldo said they have shared a respectful relationship throughout their careers. "I've never had a bad relationship with Messi. We shared 15 years of awards and always got along well. It was a healthy competition," he said.

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo PHOTO: X

Highlighting his versatility, Ronaldo said, "I do everything in football. I'm strong, good with both feet, strong in the air, and take free kicks well."

The comments reignite the eternal debate over football's greatest player, with Ronaldo unapologetically backing himself. —*Agencies*

Girona ends losing streak with a win over Las Palmas

MADRID, 4 FEB

Girona claimed a much-needed 2-1 victory against Las Palmas, ending a four-match losing streak in La Liga. Both teams entered the match desperate for points after failing to secure a win in their previous outings.

The host team took an early lead, with Abel Ruíz finding the net just seven minutes in, skilfully slotting the ball under the advancing goalkeeper after evading the offside trap. Ruíz, however, missed the opportunity to double the advantage with a saved penalty right before halftime.

In the 79th minute, Colombian winger Yáser Asprilla extended Girona's lead to 2-0 with a well-placed low shot from the edge of the box. Las Palmas managed to pull one back through Fabio Silva just three minutes later, but it wasn't enough to change the outcome.

Following the match, Girona moved up to seventh in the league standings. —*PTI*

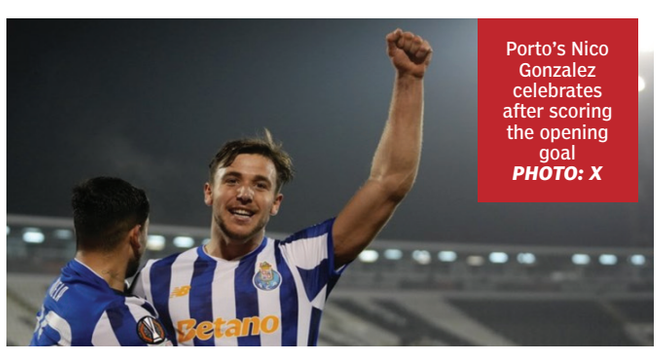
TRANSFER WINDOW ENDS

Man City, PSG, & Aston Villa make big moves

LONDON, 4 FEB

The midseason transfer window closed with Manchester City and Aston Villa making headline-grabbing moves. Manchester City, the four-time defending Premier League champions, splashed out £61.8M on Porto midfielder Nico Gonzalez, marking a significant investment aimed at salvaging a tumultuous season. City's spending in January surpassed £200M, with other notable signings including Egypt forward Omar Marmoush for £73M and defenders Abdukodir Khusanov and Vitor Reis for a collective £77M.

In contrast, Aston Villa secured a loan deal for Marco Asensio, adding depth to their squad ahead of a Champions League push. Villa also welcomed Marcus Rashford, who fell out of favour at Manchester United, further bolstering their attacking options.



Porto's Nico Gonzalez celebrates after scoring the opening goal PHOTO: X

Paris Saint-Germain made waves by signing sought-after Georgia forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia for around £72 million, marking a shift towards younger talents following the departures of Lionel Messi and Neymar. PSG offloaded several players, including striker Randal Kolo Muani to Juventus and defender Milan Skriniar to Fenerbahce.

Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, recruitment efforts faced setbacks as Neymar departed Al-Hilal after a brief spell, citing injury struggles. The most notable signing in the Saudi league was Colombia striker Jhon Duran, who joined Al-Nassr from Villa for around £80 million.

US defender Naomi Girma became the first million-dollar player in women's soccer, transferring to Chelsea, while England midfielder Keira Walsh returned to the Women's Super League. —*PTI*

Carlsen accuses FIDE chief of coercion, fake promises

NEW DELHI, 4 FEB

World number one Magnus Carlsen has urged International Chess Federation (FIDE) President Arkady Dvorkovich to resign over alleged "coercion of players, misuse of power, and broken promises." This follows the collapse of negotiations between FIDE and the Freestyle Chess Tour, co- founded by Carlsen and German entrepreneur Jan Henric Buettner, concerning the use of the term "world championship."

FIDE, recently announced that discussions failed and requested players wishing to join the Freestyle events to sign a waiver to remain eligible for the official World Championship cycle. This prompted the Freestyle Tour to criticise FIDE while agreeing to postpone the use of the championship title for this year's grand finale, negating the need for the waiver. "By forcing players to sign an unacceptable waiver, you have reneged on your promise. Will you resign?" Carlsen questioned.

FIDE remarked that the Tour opted for a privately organised format, ignoring FIDE's authority over the title. —*PTI*